

Hazel Court School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	114694
Local Authority	East Sussex
Inspection number	311668
Inspection date	4 June 2008
Reporting inspector	Mike Kell

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	11–19
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	50
6th form	41
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Helen Rowe
Headteacher	Peter Gordon
Date of previous school inspection	26 April 2004
School address	Larkspur Drive Eastbourne BN23 8EJ
Telephone number	01323 465720
Fax number	01323 740121

Age group	11-19
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

Hazel Court is organised into two distinct departments, a secondary department and a further education (FE) department, approximately three miles apart. Both departments are housed in recently built specialist accommodation on the same sites as mainstream provision. The local authority, school and parents refer to this as co-location. The secondary department is housed in the same building as a secondary school, but with its own identity. The FE department, for students aged 16 to 19, is located alongside a local FE college. Also on this site is Oak House, a new establishment for young people aged 19 and over with profound and multiple learning difficulties. It is funded by the Learning and Skills Council, managed by the FE college, and has very close links with Hazel Court. Hazel Court pupils automatically move from the secondary department to the FE department at the end of Year 11.

The school also runs separate provision for the local authority, for pupils from across the whole county with both autism and exceptionally challenging behaviour. This specialist class is on a third site, in a primary special school about half a mile away from Hazel Court's secondary department.

All of the pupils and students have a statement of special educational needs. In just over half of cases, this is for severe learning difficulties. The great majority of the others have autism or moderate learning difficulties, and the remaining few have profound and multiple learning difficulties. Boys outnumber girls by almost two to one.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

Hazel Court is a good school that parents overwhelmingly support and pupils love to attend. The FE department provides a good education that prepares students well for moving into training or continuing education. Pupils and students benefit greatly from excellent accommodation and by being co-located with mainstream provision. The FE department, in particular, has developed excellent links with all of its partners.

Pupils make excellent progress in their personal development. Their very high attendance, excellent behaviour and extremely positive attitudes give them a very solid platform for learning. Teachers capitalise on this. Good teaching encourages rapid learning and so pupils make good progress and achieve well even though the nature of their learning difficulties and disabilities means that standards are exceptionally low in the school and the FE department. In the FE department, although students now make good progress in lessons, their progress over time has not proceeded at the same rate and their achievements are only satisfactory. This is because FE department procedures for assessing students' work and setting targets are only now becoming embedded. Historically, this has reduced teachers' ability to track students' progress and evaluate their achievements accurately. Teachers use information and communication technology (ICT) very effectively to stimulate learning but pupils and students are not encouraged to use this technology as much as they could. They confirm that they wish they had greater access to computers. While some pupils with the severest communication difficulties benefit from using ICT as a communication tool, such as when making choices, others could also benefit from such devices.

Pupils follow a good variety of learning activities. A range of visits and visitors into school bring a well-planned curriculum to life. Very good links with the co-located school and college provide pupils and students with access to specialist accommodation and enable small groups of them to be included in some lessons with their mainstream peers. Hazel Court is a very caring school within which pupils are treated respectfully and with dignity, but it does not have in place the fully completed central staff record that it has to maintain in order to comply with safeguarding requirements.

Good leadership and management have ensured that the school has evolved well since the last inspection. However, a major concern that was raised at that time remains unresolved despite the school's best efforts. Pupils with autism in the separately located specialist class are housed in a single dilapidated hut in the centre of a primary special school from which they cannot readily access an appropriate curriculum. The accommodation and facilities are completely inadequate. Feasibility studies undertaken by the local authority on ways to improve them have not led to any actions. School leaders monitor aspects of the school's work routinely and they evaluate their findings well to develop consistent practices and high expectations. They have a determination to bring about further change and a good capacity to do so with the support of a perceptive and supportive governing body.

Effectiveness of the sixth form

Grade: 2

The FE department builds very well on the work that is done in school in promoting pupils' personal development. The students make outstanding progress in this respect. They develop into mature, confident young people who are very willing to express their views. They say that

they are extremely happy, believe that they work hard and confirm that they feel very safe: 'we don't allow bullying here'. They attend as regularly as they can and display very impressive behaviour and attitudes. Such a positive situation arises because learning is a rewarding experience for the students. Staff have established an environment and culture that acknowledges the students' age, and so learning and the curriculum focus very much on preparing the students for leaving the department. They do this very successfully, with most students moving into the mainstream college. There is no suitable course there for students with the most profound needs, but the close link with Oak House now provides this. Students receive a good curriculum that promotes the acquisition of key skills, such as literacy and numeracy, and which encourages independence and self-help skills. However, students' use of ICT is underdeveloped. The curriculum is supported and extended well by links with the co-located and other colleges and by visits into the community as part of the work-related learning programme. Students are taught well and they make good progress in lessons, but historically their achievements have been only satisfactory. This is because there has not been a rigorous assessment procedure that has enabled staff to make a detailed evaluation of their students' work and, subsequently, to track and measure the progress that they make.

What the school should do to improve further

- Complete the single central staff record fully in order to comply with current safeguarding requirements.
- Ensure the quality of accommodation and access to the curriculum are improved for the specialist class for pupils with autism.
- Extend pupils' and students' use of ICT as a learning tool and, in a few cases, as a communication aid.
- Assess students' work more effectively so that staff can set clearer targets, track students' achievements better and measure their progress more accurately.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Grade for sixth form: 3

Inevitably, pupils' standards of work are significantly below those expected of pupils of similar age because of the severe and complex nature of their learning difficulties. Even so, all pupils make good progress and achieve well. Carefully moderated assessments of work enable staff to determine accurate targets for pupils. The school sets two types of target. One type focuses on curriculum targets that link to 'p' levels. The other type is set in conjunction with parents, and the school describes them as targets that 'will make the biggest difference to a child's life'. They focus on aspects such as communication and behaviour, which in turn contribute to the pace at which pupils learn and make progress. Pupils do well in achieving both types of target because the targets are relevant and suitably challenging, and the pupils' progress is closely monitored. As a result, pupils make good progress in developing their literacy competence and in consolidating their mathematical skills and understanding. While pupils also make progress in their use of ICT, they do not do so at such a rapid rate because not all staff always recognise the potential opportunities for pupils to rehearse these skills and to develop new ones.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

Grade for sixth form: 1

The school's commitment to promoting pupils' personal development bears a rich dividend, and links with the co-located school make an important contribution to this. Pupils show notable improvement in their confidence as they become more independent and responsible for their own actions. Pupils confirm that they feel well prepared for leaving school. They show an excellent understanding of what they need to do to remain healthy, and they know how to stay safe, such as when crossing the road and if approached by strangers. The Pupil/Student Charter, to which pupils and students contributed, forms the basis of much of the school's work and it is evident in day-to-day interactions. Relationships between staff and pupils are very good. Pupils recognise right from wrong and they are respectful and supportive of each other. As a result, they are willing to take on responsibilities in school, such as being a representative on the school council or doing small jobs, but older pupils could take on more routine tasks around school commensurate with their ages and capabilities. Students make some good contributions within the local community, such as through the Millennium Volunteers programme. The accommodation on the third site inhibits opportunities to engage with peers, which has an impact on the social development for the very small number of pupils on this site. Nevertheless, as a result of the skilful work of the staff, their social development is good.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Grade for sixth form: 2

Staff's acute understanding of pupils' learning and personal needs enables them to have high, but realistic, expectations. Accurate assessments give them a secure knowledge of pupils' achievements. Consequently, they provide a good range of activities that build well on pupils' prior learning. Activities are carefully chosen to match individual pupils' needs and teaching assistants are well briefed about their role in supporting pupils' learning and behaviour. Pupils listen carefully, and classroom routines are well established. No time is lost as pupils move from one type of activity to the next, therefore, learning proceeds at a good pace. Teachers use a good variety of high quality multi-sensory resources to grab pupils' interest and to maintain their participation. Staff also use questions effectively to check pupils' learning and to encourage their inclusion in lessons. They, and teaching assistants, do this using a good range of communication approaches, such as symbols, signing and the Picture Exchange Communication System. However, this does not always include ICT as a mechanism for enabling all pupils with the most profound communication difficulties to be fully involved. Occasionally, this means that they do not contribute as fully as they might. Pupils in the specialist class on the third site learn as well as can be expected in the context of the accommodation. Staff do their utmost to provide pupils with lively and relevant activities but they are constantly constrained by the cramped and inadequate nature of the premises.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

Grade for sixth form: 2

The school provides a broad, varied and interesting curriculum that includes an extensive enrichment programme. Each year, a small number of pupils who are capable of doing so join a party of pupils from the co-located school for a week's educational visit to Spain. This introduces pupils to another culture. Other school activities, such as a visit to a Buddhist temple, help pupils to become aware of multi-cultural Britain. There is also an annual residential trip when pupils stay under canvas or in dormitories and take part in adventure activities and outdoor pursuits. Residential visits such as these make a powerful contribution to pupils' personal development. The majority of pupils receive appropriate accreditation for their work and although the school is seeking alternatives for some groups of pupils, it has not yet introduced these additional courses. A careers programme introduces pupils to the world of work, although it tends to focus primarily on preparing pupils for the work-related programme in the FE department rather than providing a comprehensive syllabus in its own right. Whilst this has merit in terms of planning a 14–19 curriculum, rather than one for just Years 10 and 11, it assumes that all pupils will transfer to the FE department. This removes opportunities for the most capable pupils to pursue a college course, go on work experience or participate in, for example, a Team Enterprise scheme. Very poor accommodation and facilities on the third site, and its distance from the specialist provision in the secondary department, greatly restrict the quality of the curriculum the staff can provide.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

Grade for sixth form: 2

On a day-to-day basis, the school takes very good care of its pupils. Staff work well with a range of therapists and colleagues from medical and social care services to put pupils in a good position to learn. Pupils' behaviour is managed well, and when interventions are required, they are carried out safely and sensitively. Procedures for child protection are good except for the absence of a single central staff record. There is good practice in school for supporting and guiding learners' academic progress. Teachers' accurate knowledge of their pupils' learning enables them to set targets that are articulated in a way that promotes small steps in learning. The preciseness of the targets also allows staff to monitor pupils' progress and to judge their success in attaining them. This procedure contributes greatly to the pace of pupils' learning and the extent of their achievements. Staff working with the separately located specialist class have no adequate areas that they can use to provide meaningful and sensitive one-to-one care and support.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

Grade for sixth form: 2

Although a relatively new team, school leaders work effectively together in formulating what they need to do and in monitoring the changes that they implement and the practice that they expect. The impact of their work is evident in a number of ways. For instance, routine and

focused lesson observations have raised the overall quality of teaching and learning by providing targeted interventions to support less effective practice. Lesson observations identified that symbols from different systems were being used and so leaders conducted a consultation exercise that concluded with a consistent approach from all staff. While leaders provide electronic aids in recognition of the fact that a few pupils need such devices to support their communication, ICT is not available to every pupil who might, on occasion, benefit. Leaders at all levels in school use assessment data well to check on pupils' progress, and they analyse this information to ensure that no pupils, or groups of pupils, are underachieving.

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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	16-19
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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	2
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?	2	1
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	2	2

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	2	3
The standards ¹ reached by learners	4	4
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	2	3
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	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	
How well learners enjoy their education	1	
The attendance of learners	1	
The behaviour of learners	1	
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	2
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	2	2
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	2	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	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	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?	No	No
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

5 June 2008

Dear Students

Inspection of Hazel Court School, Eastbourne BN23 8EJ

We really enjoyed visiting your school. Thank you for making us feel so welcome. A special thank you to those of you who gave up your time to speak with us.

You are right to be proud of Hazel Court. It is a good school and college. The buildings and equipment are excellent and you make the most of them. You love going to school and you behave very well. You really enjoy lessons and you learn a lot and make good progress. The school and college teachers give you lots of interesting things to do and plan many trips for you. The trip to Spain and the outdoor holiday sound very exciting. You said that you feel very safe in school. This is because staff take good care of you and help you to grow into sensible young people who are ready to leave school and college. You know a great deal about staying healthy and keeping safe, and some of you help out in school, such as being on the school council.

The people who run the school have lots of ideas about how they can make things better and we have asked them to work particularly on the following four things:

- Complete all the necessary paperwork that shows that you are safe.
- Make sure that all of you are in good buildings and have the facilities you need.
- Give you more chances to use computers.
- Make sure that college staff know exactly how well every one of you is doing.

You can help the staff to make things even better by continuing to go to school as often as you can, listening to what you are told and working hard.

Thank you once again. I wish all of you the very best of luck in the future, especially if you are leaving school or college this year.

Yours sincerely

Mike Kell Lead Inspector



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