

New Horizons School

Inspection report

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| Unique Reference Number | 114697 |
| Local Authority | East Sussex |
| Inspection number | 311670 |
| Inspection dates | 12–13 November 2007 |
| Reporting inspector | Judi Bedawi |

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

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| Type of school | Special |
| School category | Community |
| Age range of pupils | 7–16 |
| Gender of pupils | Mixed |
| Number on roll | |
| School | 96 |
| Appropriate authority | The governing body |
| Chair | Carol Adams |
| Headteacher | Steven Pugh |
| Date of previous school inspection | 1 September 2003 |
| School address | Beauchamp Road St Leonards-on-Sea TN38 9JU |
| Telephone number | 01424 858020 |
| Fax number | 01424 855117 |

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

The school is located on two sites and also uses the facilities on two other local school sites. It provides for pupils with social, emotional and behavioural difficulties (SEBD) and for a small number with autism (ASD), with a unit for severe ASD. It also provides Key Stage 3, 4 and part-time Key Stage 2 pupil referral units (PRU's), two Key Stage 3 units to support mainstream re-integration and a small behaviour support service (BSS) for mainstream schools. From September 2007, pupils permanently excluded from other schools in the area have been admitted. Currently, 49 pupils have a statement of special educational need. Almost all are White British boys, with very few girls or minority ethnic pupils. The headteacher was appointed in January 2006. There is additional provision for extended services, including adult literacy, and a weekly youth club for ASD pupils.

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: 3

New Horizons is a satisfactory and improving school with several good features. The headteacher shows good, perceptive leadership. His clear vision for raising achievement and standards across all sites is shared by his able new senior leadership team and supportive governing body. His ability to forge changes that make better provision and outcomes for pupils is starting to generate a culture of success. Pupils' distrust of learning, following interrupted education in other settings, because of extreme behaviour and additional complex needs, is changing. One pupil said 'This school is the best!' and others agreed with him. Good 'wrap around' pastoral care and partnerships with other agencies support pupils well, so they are starting to enjoy learning, realising that they can achieve and succeed. They particularly enjoy sport, art, design and technology and information and communication technology (ICT), but know they could do better in other subjects. Many do not have a clear understanding of their learning targets and of how they can improve. Pupils' personal development is satisfactory. Behaviour is improving, because of firm, consistent strategies based on the staff's good knowledge of each pupil. This means that there are far fewer fixed-term exclusions for extreme behaviour. Attendance is also improving as a result of productive links with many families and carers. However, a few older pupils still do not attend school regularly enough. Although standards are well below average, pupils' achievement is satisfactory. Progress from very low starting points is satisfactory, but with older pupils who attend regularly making good progress. Pupils feel secure in school but do not always adopt safe practices in the local community, for instance by smoking. They understand the merits of exercise and healthy eating but regret the loss of 'junk' food. Many of the oldest pupils are particularly well motivated by improved success in accreditation and by the good vocational, enterprise and further education provision, aiding their good progress. Otherwise, there is no significant difference in achievement between pupil groups although pupils without statements of special educational needs do slightly less well. The satisfactory teaching is appropriately focused on basic skills and raising self-esteem, filling significant gaps in pupils' prior learning. As a result, most pupils can speak confidently. Teaching strategies do not, however, consistently provide sustained challenge, including enough opportunities to develop and extend writing skills and confidence across all subjects. Improvements have been made to the curriculum to provide good opportunities for pupils to use their skills and interests through increasingly personalised learning and this in turn is enhancing pupils' motivation and their interest in learning. Monitoring and evaluation by middle managers is not fully effective in addressing inconsistencies in the level of challenge in teaching and learning. Social development, including pupils' ability to make friends and to say sorry and mean it when they act inappropriately, is good. A small number of parents and carers completed questionnaires, which are almost entirely positive. Typical comments note the 'tireless' commitment of staff, a 'fantastic' year with improved behaviour and 'my child is finally starting to learn!'

What the school should do to improve further

- Improve pupils' writing, ensuring that teaching strategies provide more opportunities for them to write and enhance their skills and confidence in different subjects.
- Develop the monitoring role of middle managers to ensure that there is a sharper focus on identifying inconsistencies in teaching and learning and on securing improvement.
- Ensure that pupils know their targets and understand what they need to do to improve.

- Work with pupils and their families and carers to improve and sustain the attendance of a few older pupils who do not come to school regularly enough. A small proportion of schools whose overall effectiveness is judged satisfactory but which have areas of underperformance will receive a monitoring visit by an Ofsted Inspector before their next section 5 Inspection.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 3

Attainment on entry is very low and remains so for pupils entering school throughout the year, whatever their ability, owing to significant gaps in their learning. Standards remain well below average throughout the school. From their very low starting points, the majority makes satisfactory gains in achievement and progress as they move up the school with most of the pupils in Years 10 and 11 who attend regularly making good progress. Otherwise, there is no significant difference in the progress of any pupil group including the few girls, ASD and minority ethnic pupils. Pupils without statements of special educational needs perform slightly less well. The school's tracking of progress in relation to prior attainment and capability over the last two years confirms satisfactory progress through Key Stages 2 and 3 and good progress in Key Stage 4. In the summer of 2007, almost all Year 11 pupils passed at least one entry level GCSE, as a result of the focused teaching and relevant accreditation available, and almost all moved on to further education, work related training or employment.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 3

Pupils like the secure school routines. As a result, they have sound learning attitudes, enjoying especially the practical lessons, learning about future employment and the ASD youth club. Pupils say they also like the new curriculum initiatives, for example on transport. They are less keen on writing because they lack confidence in their abilities to record work. The attendance of a few older pupils is not regular enough. Pupils are starting to work together appropriately within the school community, are more caring and tolerant of others' needs. Bullying is not the main concern it once was with pupils adopting safer practices in the way they conduct themselves. Relationships are good, with a single racist incident recorded. Pupils usually apologise when, for example, they are upset and use unacceptable language. They all respect the headteacher, not wanting a visit for bad behaviour. Most behave appropriately relative to their difficulties, but find sustaining acceptable behaviour hard on some days. A few minutes 'time out' helps, so that they return to learn, with far less need for exclusion. Pupils like the points rewards. When attending local offsite centres and colleges, behaviour is consistently good. A younger pupil talks proudly about returning to his primary school. Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. Pupils have a good understanding of right and wrong although they sometimes forget. Good assemblies reinforce the sense of culture, community and shared expectations. Pupils contribute effectively to the pupil participation group, for example in identifying the need for new furniture. Activities that pupils particularly enjoy, including physical education, art and residential trips, contribute well to enhancing their personal development and social skills which have often been curtailed by previous gaps in education. By Year 11 pupils' good social skills equip them well for work experience. Pupils know why they should stay safe and healthy, but do not always do so when in the community, smoking or eating the 'junk' food that many say they yearn for.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

Some teaching is good, particularly for older pupils, but the quality of teaching and the amount of challenge provided are not consistent across the school. Subject knowledge and use of questioning are good so that pupils enjoy making effective verbal contributions, asking increasingly challenging questions of their teachers. However, there is sometimes too much 'teacher talk' and activities planned are not always well matched to the pupils' different abilities. This is owing to inconsistencies in the use of assessment to inform planning. Pupils say they could work harder. In addition, lesson ends do not always focus sharply enough on what pupils have learnt and understood from the lesson. Although pupils are effectively encouraged to contribute orally in lessons, expectations are not always high enough in encouraging pupils to do more written work, even though they find it difficult and would rather avoid it. Relationships between teachers and pupils are good. Good behaviour management and effective teamwork between teaching and support staff establish a positive learning environment so that pupils are now more willing to learn.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The school has put a lot of effort into ensuring the curriculum is interesting and motivates pupils who have been disaffected by learning. As a result, the relevant, well resourced curriculum meets many pupils' complex needs well. Although not yet impacting fully on pupils' achievement and personal development, the revised curriculum is successfully helping pupils to become more positive about their learning and belief that they can achieve. In particular, the wide range of visits and visitors enhances pupils' spiritual, social, moral and cultural development. Another strong feature is the personalised, thematic approach to planning that ensures younger pupils successfully re-engage in learning. As a result, many are able to return to their mainstream schools. However, opportunities for writing in different subjects are not yet consistently given enough emphasis in curriculum planning. Older pupils have a particularly effective curriculum offering many opportunities for enrichment and work with other providers and, as a result, regular attenders make good progress. Pupils access appropriate accreditation for college or work, choosing routes matching their interests, with good careers advice and work experience. The school has set up 'real work' related provision on and off site, to provide high quality experiences of the working world from planning to selling. Consequently, older pupils are well prepared for life beyond New Horizons with nearly all leavers in 2007 going on to further education, work related learning or employment. Started in September, the off-site creative arts centre for permanently excluded Year 11 pupils has already achieved recognition. A film that has been entirely acted, directed, shot, cut, edited and produced by a small pupil team is to be shown at an excellence in education conference. The centre is well led, with the teaching of literacy, numeracy and ICT skilfully woven into creative projects.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 3

Pastoral support is good and a significant strength across all sites that is embedded at the heart of the school's work. Staff know and support their pupils and their families well. This enables pupils, including the most vulnerable who have personal advisors, to settle to learning effectively,

getting the best kind of support and help right from the start, with good use made of wide ranging external agency provision. Monitoring of pupils' personal development and behaviour is good resulting in a reduction in exclusions as pupils increasingly accept the realistic boundaries set for them. There is a rising trend in attendance in recent years although there are still a few older pupils who have low attendance. They and their families have not responded to the positive initiatives used. Procedures for safeguarding pupils are secure. Although pupils are kept well informed in relation to their behavioural and personal targets, they are less well informed about their ongoing academic progress or National Curriculum levels. Many pupils do not know their individual targets or what they have to do next to improve their work although there is some good practice in the ASD unit with targets and levels clearly displayed at work stations. This is an acknowledged area for development.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

The leadership of the perceptive headteacher is good. As a result, pupils' satisfactory achievement has been sustained during a period of considerable change and staff instability. The school's wide range of provision in place at the last inspection has been successfully enhanced and extended further. Senior leaders, including the governing body, share the headteacher's vision for raising achievement and standards through the highest expectations of staff and pupils. Most importantly, pupils are starting to believe in themselves and become more interested in their learning. Clear targets and expectations are effectively securing improvement in behaviour. Several initiatives have improved the quality and range of curriculum opportunities, enabling better outcomes for pupils and resulting in improved behaviour, moral and social skills and the raising of pupils' future aspirations. The school improvement plan accurately reflects the school's strengths and weaknesses but could be usefully extended beyond one year. Leadership and management overall are satisfactory, with inconsistencies in the quality of the monitoring and evaluation role carried out by middle managers. As a result, the school's knowledge of itself through self-evaluation is satisfactory. There is, however, good management of support staff and a good programme of professional development. Financial management is secure and ensures that the multi-site provision is well resourced. The school has a satisfactory capacity to improve, with much greater stability now in staffing, including senior managers, and with improvements made to provision that are starting to improve outcomes for pupils.

Annex A

Inspection judgements

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| 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? | 3 |
| 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 capacity to make any necessary improvements | 3 |

Achievement and standards

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|--|---|
| How well do learners achieve? | 3 |
| The standards ¹ reached by learners | 4 |
| How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners | 3 |
| How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress | 3 |

Personal development and well-being

| | |
|---|---|
| How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners? | 3 |
| The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development | 2 |
| The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles | 3 |
| The extent to which learners adopt safe practices | 3 |
| How well learners enjoy their education | 3 |
| The attendance of learners | 3 |
| The behaviour of learners | 3 |
| The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community | 3 |
| 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? | 3 |
| 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? | 3 |

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

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| How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners? | 3 |
| 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 | 3 |
| The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation | 3 |
| How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can | 3 |
| 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 |

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

- 14 November 2007 Dear Pupils Inspection of New Horizons School, St Leonards on Sea, TN38 9JU You made us most welcome when we inspected your school recently. We enjoyed meeting and talking to you. Thank you for telling us so much about what you do and like at school. We think that your school is satisfactory and improving with some good features. It provides you with a satisfactory education. We think that you have a good headteacher and we know you have good relationships with everyone who helps and cares for you so well. We can see that most of you are working hard to improve your behaviour and that your progress in your subjects and in your personal development is satisfactory. We know that your teachers do a sound job in helping you learn, asking interesting questions that you like answering, but you told us that you think you could work harder. We know that you are looked after well, although many of you do not know your learning targets or how to improve your work because you told us. We also know you enjoy the good activities provided for you including sport, art, and information and communication technology (ICT). We can see that older pupils are doing well in their examinations, enjoy work related learning and are looking forward to their future beyond school. Although most of you come to school regularly we know that a few of you do not and this needs to improve. There are four things we have asked the school to do to make it even better:
 - ensure your teachers work with you to improve your writing
 - to make sure that staff look at and assess how well you are learning to see how you can make better progress
 - to make sure you know your learning targets and what you need to do to improve
 - to work with the parents and the pupils who do not come to school often enough, so they will return and have better opportunities when they leave school. I hope you continue to do well in the future. Judi Bedawi Lead inspector

Annex B



14 November 2007

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I hope you continue to do well in the future.

Judi Bedawi
Lead inspector