

Highview School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	119044
Local Authority	Kent
Inspection number	313169
Inspection dates	6–7 February 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	4–17
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	108
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Yvonne Parry
Headteacher	Neil Birch
Date of previous school inspection	17 May 2004
School address	Moat Farm Road Folkestone CT19 5DJ
Telephone number	01303 258755
Fax number	01303 251185

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

Highview School educates pupils with moderate learning difficulties and, increasingly, complex learning difficulties. All pupils have a statement of special educational need. Attainment on entry to Reception is below expectations because of the pupils' learning difficulties. There are twice as many boys as girls, a third of pupils are entitled to free school meals and there are 14 pupils in the care of the local authority. The great majority of pupils are White British. The school is a member of the Shepway cluster of schools. Following a period of uncertainty about a possible change to the nature of the school's intake, which did not ultimately take place, a new headteacher was appointed in January 2007.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

The overall effectiveness of Highview School is satisfactory. It offers satisfactory and improving provision with some good features. Parents overwhelmingly support and value the school saying, 'This is a superb school' and 'There is an excellent ethos'. Behaviour is excellent and pupils care for each other and are always polite and courteous as there is much support for behaviour from staff. Because the school places great importance on social and personal development, pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. Pupils care deeply about their school and enjoy what it provides. They feel safe and grow in confidence in the school's supportive atmosphere. They are aware of healthy choices in eating and the need to be active because the school promotes these opportunities well, including the provision of a wide range of physical education activities. Pupils contribute to the school as a community with eagerness and older pupils flourish when given leadership opportunities. Pupils have a satisfactory awareness of workplace and related skills because the school provides sound opportunities in this area.

The school has experienced a period of uncertainty about its future. During this time, the governors provided strong support and the appointment of a new headteacher in January 2007 began a phase of much greater stability. The successful leadership of the headteacher, well supported by senior staff, is creating a strong focus on raising standards, including the careful analysis of data on pupils' progress and taking prompt action to improve provision. Governors continue to give good support. They increasingly challenge the school as they receive more detailed information, enabling them to do so effectively. A clear vision and sense of direction is evident and good planning is leading to the implementation of necessary changes, for example more support is in place for staff to develop stronger subject specialisms for older pupils. The school does all it can to reduce the impact of the constraints on accommodation.

Achievement is satisfactory. Pupils' attainment is below average expectation because of their special educational needs. Children in the Foundation Stage get off to a good start and progress well because staff provide a varied range of activities and assess development carefully. The good progress is maintained across the primary sector of the school, but the rate of progress slows when pupils enter the secondary phase. Although these older pupils make satisfactory progress it is not as strong as it could be because teaching is more variable than it is elsewhere in the school. Teaching and learning, while satisfactory as a whole, have particular strengths in the close relationships between staff and pupils and in the good knowledge staff have of pupils. Communication is also successfully encouraged, including manual signing and the use of symbols where appropriate. However, lessons are not always challenging enough. Sometimes they do not have enough pace and activities are not always as practical or relevant enough to meet pupils' needs and experience.

The satisfactory curriculum has strengths in its support and encouragement of personal and social development and in developing independence and confidence in pupils. It offers a range of extra activities at lunchtimes and after school, but the range of courses that lead to examinations for older pupils is limited. The school works well with some outside agencies, and has recently formed an association to extend its links with parents. Nevertheless, the school is aware that partnerships with mainstream schools and all local authority services are not as well developed as they should be. Against the background of changes in pupil needs and past uncertainties about the school's future, effective steps have been taken to promote

improvements since the previous inspection and, with the new, strong leadership, the school is in a good position to make further improvements.

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

Children in the Foundation Stage make good progress. The few children in this stage are educated in a group alongside children from Years 1 and 2. Individual and small group work helps ensure that the particular needs of Foundation Stage children are successfully met. The teaching space and the outdoor play area are small and limit opportunities for physical development, but staff work hard and effectively to compensate. For example, a teaching assistant trained in occupational therapy works with the children.

The teacher and teaching assistants work closely together to make good use of the systems to support children's language and literacy skills, including the use of manual signing and symbols. The Foundation Stage profile and other assessments are effectively used and the flexible range of activities helps ensure children develop well. Healthy eating is encouraged through the choice of healthy drinks and fruits. Children are learning to care for each other, for example, Years 1 and 2 pupils in their class act as role models for the younger ones. Records are carefully completed and recording routines are manageable and securely established.

What the school should do to improve further

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- Ensure that all lessons are well paced, with relevant and practical activities, so that pupils are always challenged to do the best they possibly can.
- Improve the curriculum by extending opportunities to take more examinations.
- Strengthen provision by improving and extending partnerships with all support services and mainstream schools.

A small proportion of the 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

Although pupils' standards of attainment are below national expectations because of their special educational needs, they make sound progress in their learning and achieve satisfactorily. Primary aged pupils make good progress, but the rate of progress slows to satisfactory for the older pupils. There is no evidence of significant differences in the progress of different groups, including girls and boys and children who are in the care of the local authority. Pupils with different additional needs, including those with autistic spectrum disorder, make similar progress to other pupils in their age group. Opportunities for gaining accreditation for achievements include the Award Scheme Development and Accreditation Network (ASDAN) and Entry Level General Certificates of Secondary Education, but the range is not as wide as it could be. Across the school, pupils make strong progress in developing communication skills because of the support they receive in this area.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils show much understanding and care for each other and display high levels of trust and mutual support. Behaviour is outstanding because of good relationships within the school and its encouraging ethos. Pupils say they enjoy school very much. Their attendance is good, despite an increasing number with additional medical needs that can result in higher levels of absence. Pupils are confident in the safe environment of the school. They say they are not bullied and that 'people are there for you'. They seek help when they need it and follow clear guidance on health and safety.

Pupils have a good understanding of healthy food and enjoy exercise through physical education lessons and after-school activities. Pupils learn to take responsibilities in the school community from the Reception Year up to Year 11. Older pupils who are prefects learn confidence and increase their self-esteem through acting as role models by showing visitors around the school and helping younger children. Pupils willingly take advantage of opportunities to participate in the local community, such as singing at a local residential home for elderly people. They also participate well in aspects of school life, eagerly taking on responsibilities from simple tasks to representing the school for visitors. Pupils engage in outside work-experience in their final year and satisfactorily develop skills relating to economic well-being.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

The quality of teaching varies across the school. Nevertheless, no inadequate teaching was observed during the inspection and, sometimes, teaching is good, particularly for those in the Reception and primary groups. Among common strengths of teaching and learning is the good support of teaching assistants and the close teamwork between staff. Excellent pupil behaviour in lessons makes a valuable contribution to learning, as does the constant focus on communication. Staff know pupils and their needs well. Pupils' needs are assessed during lessons and this information feeds into whole school procedures for collecting and analysing data on pupils' progress.

Where teaching is satisfactory, rather than good, the pace of lessons is not always sufficiently strong. In addition, activities and approaches do not always ensure and emphasise the relevance of activities to pupils' experience and to everyday life, or provide enough concrete examples to ensure that pupils understand ideas fully. These shortcomings inhibit pupils' progress.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

The satisfactory curriculum has strengths in encouraging personal and social development, including independence and helping others. Provision for literacy, numeracy and information and communication technology is satisfactory. The developing role of middle managers as subject leaders is valuably contributing to improvement in these subjects. The preparation of pupils to deal with economic matters is satisfactory. The school recognises the need to expand the range of accredited courses including vocational courses. Curriculum provision for health and safety education is good, contributing much to pupils' feelings of security. Opportunities to contribute to the community, including leisure activities and inter-school activities such as

tag rugby, are satisfactory. Enrichment activities include lunchtime activities and an after-school Mini Movers club. The carefully planned approach to developing the curriculum is providing a clear direction leading to improvements.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

Staff use information from the child's previous school well to make sure they settle in quickly. Close teamwork among staff, including the school nurse, contribute effectively to the pupils' care. Teachers set individual targets for pupils in all subjects. These targets are gradually being tracked more closely as the comparatively new system becomes embedded. The coordinated approach to developing communication supports good interaction, including signing and the use of symbols. Procedures to monitor health and safety are good and are effectively monitored by senior staff and the governing body. All staff are trained in child protection procedures and the school has a central record for safeguarding purposes. Good procedures are in place for annual reviews of pupils' statements of special educational needs. Pupils contribute well to these either through a questionnaire or by attending their reviews. Connexions advisers attend the transition reviews for pupils, which provide good advice to pupils and their parents on future opportunities. The links with some services and with mainstream school are underdeveloped, limiting further opportunities to develop the provision. The very good support for pupils' personal development includes the tutor system and counselling for those requiring it. Behaviour management is very good and the reward system is very well used to encourage excellent behaviour. The breakfast club, provided for all pupils who need it, is greatly enjoyed.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

The new headteacher, well supported by senior staff, provides strong leadership and sets a clear course for improvement. Challenging targets to improve provision have been implemented and these are driving change and improvements. For example, staff restructuring, to give greater responsibilities to those responsible for coordinating subjects, is leading to improvements in subject teaching. Self-evaluation, based on careful gathering and analysis of data, is used effectively to identify and act upon areas that need improving, such as improving the consistency of teaching. Inspection evidence supported the school's judgements on achievement, personal development and well-being and leadership and management. Where judgements differed, as in teaching and learning, the school had still correctly identified areas for improvement, for example, they are aware of the need for more suitable pace in lessons and actions taken are beginning to have an impact on pupils' progress although this is not yet fully developed. The governing body has vigorously supported the school through a period of uncertainty. Governors continue to provide good support and are able to question and check the school's performance in greater detail because they are now better informed.

The school's accommodation creates constraints, for example the hall has to be used for many purposes and furniture or equipment has to be cleared away each time, but the school does all it can to compensate.

Any complaints about the inspection or the report should be made following the procedures set out in the guidance 'Complaints about school inspection', which is available from Ofsted's website: www.ofsted.gov.uk.

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

Achievement and standards

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?	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	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	3

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?	3
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	3
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	3
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	2
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

It was a delight to meet you when Mary Geddes and I inspected your school recently. Thank you for your help in contributing to the inspection and for being so kind and courteous to us.

Highview provides you with satisfactory provision. We found several good things about your school. Your behaviour is excellent and you develop very well personally and socially. The school cares and supports you well and it is well led.

There are also some things that the school could do even better so I have asked the staff to:

- make your lessons more challenging by making sure they have a suitable pace, and the activities you do are relevant and practical
- give you more opportunities to take examinations including vocational ones
- develop more links with other people who support you and with mainstream schools.

Thank you again and may I wish you every success for your future.



11 February 2008

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Highview School, Folkestone, Kent CT19 5DJ

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Thank you again and may I wish you every success for your future.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads 'Michael Farrell'. The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, prominent 'M' and 'F'.

Lead inspector