

Clifton Hill School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	125470
Local Authority	Surrey
Inspection number	328338
Inspection dates	29–30 June 2009
Reporting inspector	James Bowden

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 (total)	80
Sixth form	26
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mrs Jane Lopez
Headteacher	Mrs Marion Unsworth
Date of previous school inspection	13 July 2006
School address	Chaldon Road Caterham CR3 5PH
Telephone number	01883 347 740
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Age group	11–19
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by an Additional Inspector.

Description of the school

The school provides for learners with severe learning difficulties. In addition, some learners have more complex needs including autistic spectrum disorder (30%), sensory disability, physical disability and complex medical needs (17.5%). All learners have a statement of special educational need. The school has a wide catchment area as it borders onto five other local authorities, three of which are London boroughs. Currently, there are twice as many boys than girls. Over a third are in the sixth form. Almost 90% are of White British heritage, the others representing a range of different cultural heritages. Fourteen are looked after by their respective local authorities.

Among the awards the school has gained are Sportsmark and Investors in People accreditation. It is a member of the Surrey Special School Federation and part of the Comenius Project with the British Council which fosters links with other similar schools across Europe.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 1

This outstandingly successful school continues to provide a high quality of education. It meets fully its core aim of prioritising the learning of every child so that all may achieve their full potential. Each learner is treated with dignity and respect at all times. Underpinning this is the highly effective and positive leadership of the headteacher and her senior leadership team. There is a continual focus on improvement through the promotion of learning and progress across the school throughout the whole school day. In addition, an impressive range of enrichment activities both on and off-site contribute considerably. A further strength is the highly effective collaborative and holistic approach of staff with specific expertise working at the school. This contributes significantly to learners' personal development and well-being. It also enhances the quality of their learning experience, and supports their transition from year to year, and when they leave the school, particularly well. A strong culture of communication, collaboration and cooperation between home and school ensures parents are involved fully in, and kept informed of, the progress their daughters and sons make. Expressing the sentiments of many others, one commented, 'The dedication, good humour and compassion demonstrated by all the school staff is superlative. Their patience and insightfulness really helps create a calm, happy and productive environment. Always approachable, the staff have time and energy to listen to and support parents as well.'

Achievement across the school is outstanding because of the all-round education, therapy and support package offered. Standards on entry are low compared to those nationally because of learners' considerable needs. However, the progress they make in relation to their starting points is excellent. All make significant progress in developing their communication skills and in the use of new technologies, as well as towards the well thought out targets in their individual education plans (IEPs). The more capable learners also make significant progress in developing their literacy and numeracy skills. At the end of Years 11 and 14 many gain accreditation in nationally recognised courses.

Learners' personal development and well-being, including spiritual, moral, social, emotional and cultural development, are excellent. On arrival at the start of the day, they are happy to be at school, with many smiling faces, positive comments and clear recognition of the adults who meet and greet them. The more confident also greet visitors in a positive and friendly manner; one learner asked which football team the inspector supported and another proudly showed the outcomes of their work on return from a local mainstream secondary school. As a result of the calm and sensitive support from all adults, learners are safe and willing to try new activities, such as 'throwing the hammer' (a modified plastic version) in physical education lessons, and line dancing in music. In all lessons they strive to persevere and apply themselves very well, rising well to the challenge offered by the teaching.

Learning and teaching throughout the school are outstanding. Teachers plan their lessons to ensure the individual needs of learners are met fully. In lessons there is a highly effective ethos for learning that ensures all make the best possible progress. All adults in the room are deployed effectively to ensure that all learners receive maximum support, as well as effective and positive, though not over-effusive, praise and encouragement. The outstanding curriculum meets fully the needs of all learners because it underpins the focus on teaching the key skills required for learning and transition to the next stage of their lives. Nevertheless, senior staff are constantly seeking ways of improving provision even further. They have high aspirations for learners and they have identified that they can broaden the curriculum for 14 to 19-year-olds by including

some of the national strategies included in mainstream education, while at the same time meeting fully the wide range of learners' needs. The quality of care, guidance and support is a significant strength. Each learner is supported in very specific ways. Their progress is carefully monitored, evaluated and tracked, and their personal targets are reviewed regularly. This informs future strategies for learning.

Leadership and management at all levels are outstanding. There is no complacency and the school has built on the strengths identified at the last inspection. Improvement planning, including strengthening further the quality of teaching and learning, is highly focused as a result of rigorous self-evaluation. Excellent liaison and collaboration between all staff ensures that every learner really does matter, and therefore makes excellent progress. The effectiveness of the support of the governing body has improved much since the last inspection. It is now fully involved in strategic planning and reviewing the work of the school. In the light of the senior leadership team's clear emphasis on continual improvement, and its continuing success in enabling all learners to make outstanding progress, the school has excellent capacity to improve even further.

Effectiveness of the sixth form

Grade: 1

The sixth form is led and managed by the same highly capable team as the rest of the school. This results in outstanding achievement. By the time they leave, though standards remain low, learners achieve very well in a range of accredited courses. These include Accreditation for Life and Living, Equals Moving On, the National Skills Profile and in the Award Scheme Development and Accreditation Network modules. A few are enabled to achieve success in GCSE art taught in local mainstream schools. Learners' personal development and well-being are also outstanding. They respond very well to the challenge of meeting the appropriate targets in their IEPs, which focus primarily on communication, approach to numbers, and information and communication technology (ICT). Learners' self-esteem and independence also improve significantly. A group of sixth formers, for example, prepared a lunch from ingredients they had bought in the morning in a local supermarket. They all worked together in a safe, sensible and productive manner. In addition, learners benefit from either in-house or external work experience placements. At the end of last year, 90% of learners continued on to further education training or work, the remainder moving to specialist accommodation to support independent living.

What the school should do to improve further

- Broaden even further the curriculum for 14 to 19-year-olds by including some of the national strategies included in mainstream education.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 1

On entry, learners operate at P levels - levels that are below the standard National Curriculum levels in schools. As they progress through the school, they make excellent progress within and across these levels. This is as a result of carefully planned individualised learning programmes that are supported by the very effective use of IEPs. By the end of Year 11 all learners complete at least five modules, and some as many as 15, in the externally accredited National Skills Profile. A few older ones operate at Level 1 of the National Curriculum in some aspects of their work. There is no significant difference in achievement between any of the different groups of special educational need, ethnicity or gender.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

All learners make excellent progress in relation to the challenging targets set in IEPs in relation to their personal development. In a lesson for learners with profound and complex needs, for example, some were starting to make choices from different articles on a market stall, as well as reacting to the sensory and tactile stimuli used to support the story being told. Learners are enabled to eat healthily and participate in a wide range of physical activities. For older learners these include residential outdoor and adventurous activities, the latter being recognised by the school's Sportsmark award. Older learners told the inspector that the school was a safe place to be and that 'teachers are there if you have a personal problem.' Attendance is good. While some learners may become a little frustrated due to their complex needs and communication difficulties, they respond well to sensitive interventions from adults. A calm and purposeful atmosphere is the norm in lessons and behaviour is excellent. Learners take turns, fulfil different roles and show an awareness and appreciation of each other's achievements. All are enabled to take a full part in the school community, for example through elections for the school council, fund-raising events and through being given a wide range of individual responsibilities. Learners' excellent progress in improving their key skills prepares them very well for life beyond the school.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 1

Staff know their learners very well and strive constantly to support both learning and their personal needs at all times. They are unfailing in their sensitivity, and model good teamwork and positive relationships for learners. Carefully integrated classroom therapy and withdrawal support also contribute well to the excellent progress learners make. A broad range of creative activities are used to support progress in key skills as well as their personal development and social skills. In a Key Stage 4 lesson for those with severe learning difficulties, ICT was used effectively to display the text, in Spanish, and pictures from the 'The Three Billy-goats Gruff' story. The teacher read aloud the text in Spanish, translating it into English and asking questions to each individual about the story. This led seamlessly to a task where learners worked in groups, counting successfully using numbers in Spanish. Learners with autistic spectrum disorder needs are also enabled to make excellent progress as they are provided with ample opportunities to work both individually and in groups.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 1

Extensive enrichment activities both on and off-site, and a comprehensive personal, social, health and citizenship programme, contribute highly to the breadth of learners' experience throughout their time at the school. Learners also benefit very well from the enhanced recreation opportunities at lunchtimes, including swimming and art. This underpins the progress they make in their spiritual, moral, social, emotional and cultural development. Learners also have many opportunities to visit other schools and colleges (including overseas), visit the community and other places of educational interest, as well as receiving visitors to the school to support their learning. Schemes of work and monitoring by leaders ensure that teachers' planning is thorough and supports individualised learning. As a result of its continuing self-evaluation,

senior leaders recognise that the next stage in making the curriculum even better is to include some of the strategies used in mainstream secondary schools, particularly for 14 to 19-year-olds. Excellent quality outside areas, such as the sensory gardens, gardening provision and playing field, contribute further to learners' education and learning opportunities.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 1

The school's outstanding ethos of care ensures learners' well-being is at the forefront of the school's work. Exemplary systems and procedures mean that learners, including the most vulnerable, are looked after in a safe, healthy and caring environment, develop their personal qualities and make excellent progress in their learning. The dedication, enthusiasm and commitment of all staff in working with learners underpin this aspect of the school's provision. Highly effective relationships with other professionals contribute extensively. Unauthorised absence at the school is not an issue as a result of the school's hard work to maintain good attendance. The carefully managed and highly effective individualised programme of annual reviews supports learners' transitions to the next stages of education and living.

Leadership and management

Grade: 1

The headteacher's vision is shared and promoted throughout the school. Consequently, staff at all levels contribute fully to ensuring that all learners achieve their best and develop their independence and personal skills. Staff are supported very effectively in their continuing professional development, which has been recognised by the Investors in People award. As part of the Comenius Project and membership of the Surrey Special School Federation staff are enabled to share their expertise with other professionals. Despite the complex needs of some of its learners, the school contributes significantly to promoting community cohesion both within the school and beyond. Planning for this is embedded well throughout the curriculum and assemblies are used very effectively to enable learners to consider the lives and faiths of other people. The governing body is highly effective in its role as a supportive and critical friend of the school and provides excellent support for the headteacher.

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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
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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?	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 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	

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	
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	1	
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	1	
The extent to which learners enjoy their education	1	
The attendance of learners	2	
The behaviour of learners	1	
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	1	
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	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	
How effectively leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	1	
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	1	1
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination eliminated	1	
How well does the school contribute to community cohesion?	1	
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	1	
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	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

13 July 2009

Dear Students

Inspection of Clifton Hill School, Caterham, CR3 5PH

I visited your school recently to find out how well you are doing. Thanks for making me feel welcome. A special thanks to the sixth formers who told me their thoughts about the school and to the Cedar class who invited me to their lunch, which they prepared themselves.

I decided your school is excellent because:

- you all make excellent progress
- your parents are very happy with the school
- the headteacher and all the staff look after you really well
- teachers make sure your lessons are fun and improve your skills
- the school makes sure you have lots of exciting things to do
- you are safe, and you seem so happy to be there.

The school could be even better if:

- it made some of the activities for older students even better.

Thank you all very much. I had a really good time at the school during my two-day visit.

Yours faithfully

James Bowden

Lead Inspector