

RNIB Sunshine House, Northwood

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	102463
Local Authority	Hillingdon
Inspection number	333412
Inspection dates	6–7 May 2009
Reporting inspector	Judith Charlesworth

This inspection was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005; it was also deemed a section 5 inspection under the same Act.

The registered childcare, managed by the governing body, was inspected under section 49 of the Childcare Act 2006.

Boarding provision
Social care URN
Social care inspector

The inspection of social care was carried out under the Care Standards Act 2000.

Type of school	Special
School category	Non-maintained special
Age range of pupils	2–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School (total)	21
Government funded early education provision for children aged 3 to the end of the EYFS	0
Childcare provision for children aged 0 to 3 years	0
Appropriate authority	The proprietor Mrs Deborah Rafalin
Headteacher	Mr John Ayres
Date of previous school inspection	11 December 2007

Age group	2–11
Inspection dates	6–7 May 2009
Inspection number	333412

Date of previous funded early education inspection	Not previously inspected
Date of previous childcare inspection	Not previously inspected
School address	33 Dene Road Northwood HA6 2DD
Telephone number	01923 822538
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Age group	2-11
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by an additional inspector.

The boarding accommodation was last inspected in December 2008 and provision was judged to be good.

Description of the school

Sunshine House is a non-maintained special school which provides for pupils who are blind or partially sighted, with additional multiple disabilities. Pupils are placed at the school by a number of local authorities and all have statements of their special educational needs. There are three classes. The pupils come from varied backgrounds which reflect the diverse ethnic and faith populations of London. Two pupils are of Early Years Foundation Stage age and one of these attends part-time. The school has boarding accommodation for up to 12 pupils. Currently, eight pupils use this facility on a sessional basis.

Sunshine House is owned by the Royal National Institute of Blind People (RNIB). Following a number of interim acting headteacher appointments, and the school requiring special measures after its last inspection, a formal partnership has been formed with nearby Grangewood School. This is a maintained special school in Hillingdon local authority which provides for pupils with severe and complex learning difficulties. Grangewood was judged outstanding in its last inspection of December 2008. Since September 2008, Sunshine House has been led and managed by the headteacher of Grangewood, now the executive headteacher of both schools, and a head of education, seconded full-time to Sunshine House from her post as assistant head teacher of Grangewood.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

In accordance with section 13 (5) of the Education Act 2005, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector is of the opinion that the school no longer requires special measures.

Sunshine House School has improved significantly over the past year. The quality of teaching and learning, the curriculum, support, care and guidance are all now good. As a result, pupils' achievement and personal development and well-being are good, although academic standards are, understandably, low. This improvement has been brought about by outstanding leadership and management.

The partnership with Grangewood has secured the future of Sunshine House. This partnership was instigated through the National Leaders of Education and National Support Schools initiative. Staff are unanimous in their view that the school has changed out of all recognition - morale is now high and they feel supported and directed - and that the partnership with Grangewood is entirely beneficial to both schools and their pupils. The school's frequent consultations with parents show that they agree. The senior managers have brought many of Grangewood's highly effective systems and practices to Sunshine House, and worked with staff to adapt and implement them to suit the school's particular needs. Self-evaluation is rigorous and the managers are focused on improving performance and all aspects of the school's work. There is a clear drive towards excellence, supported by a very strong ethos of consultation and evaluation which informs further improvement and continuous professional development. This includes external evaluations, carried out as research projects, for example into pupils' progress and views. The school's use of the community to enhance the curriculum and to support community cohesion in various ways has improved greatly.

The RNIB, Hillingdon local authority and the governing body have worked very hard to consult all stakeholders and develop new management and responsibility structures to assure the improvement, development and future of the school. Governance is outstanding. The governing body is now clear about its role and responsibilities, is effective and dynamic, and fulfils a strategic supportive role.

Completely new curriculum, planning and assessment systems were introduced last September. These have been very effective. Careful planning in each subject feeds into cross-curricular themes, such as 'Water, Sand and More'. Pupils very much enjoy the diverse activities they experience. The curriculum is personalised to meet individuals' needs through learning objectives set for each pupil in every subject and lesson. This gives staff a very clear focus for teaching, and academic support and guidance are consequently good. Lessons are well planned and resourced, lively and interesting. They are closely focused on each individual's learning, care and physical needs. Pupils' progress is confirmed by a number of sources of evidence, including a commercial progress tracking system for English, mathematics, science and personal development. Data from this are analysed annually by Durham University, with interim analysis by the school, and show that some higher-attaining pupils are making outstanding progress. However, the system is not finely tuned enough to be able to confirm this judgement for the lower-attaining pupils, whose progress is slower. Pupils' progress in other subjects is not recorded in this way.

The children in the Early Years Foundation Stage make good progress because their personal, physical, welfare and communication needs are very well addressed. Children follow and enjoy the same curricular themes as covered in the other two classes. However, planning does not

always support their understanding sufficiently, for example to include the use of physical or sensory prompts. Consequently, teaching is not always fully effective.

Throughout the school, the pupils benefit from robust safeguarding practices. The collaborative working practices of the high-quality multidisciplinary team support pupils' mobility, communication and personal development very effectively. Pupils enjoy school very much and are given every opportunity to become well prepared for the next stage in their lives.

On the basis of the sustained rate and depth of improvement since the last inspection, the high quality of leadership, management and governance, and the formalised partnership with Grangewood, the school's capacity for further improvement is outstanding.

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

The children in the Early Years Foundation Stage are included in a class of pupils in Years 1 and 2 who also benefit from the Early Years approach to learning and development. Provision is good. Close liaison is established with parents, which forms a good foundation for continued partnership as children move through the school. The children's welfare and well-being are given high priority and, consequently, they feel safe and respond well to the teaching and support. Children develop positive relationships and enjoy being part of a group. The curriculum is planned in the appropriate areas of learning and follows the same themes as the rest of the school. This allows the children to enjoy whole-school activities, for example, assemblies and themed days. Curriculum planning includes individual targets for children in each area of learning. Assessments are made of planned and incidental learning. Records show that children make good progress towards their targets and the early learning goals in relation to their starting points and capabilities. Children are taught individually and in a group. One-to-one work is very productive and children are given very good support and guidance to achieve the targets set. Group work, however, is sometimes less effective. This is because curriculum and lesson planning do not always take full account of the severity of the children's needs. Neither do they identify the support children require, in the provision of sensory or physical prompts for example, to help them understand stories or what is being said.

All requirements for the Early Years Foundation Stage are met. The quality of provision is carefully monitored and an emphasis is placed on staff development and support. This makes a good contribution to the provision's overall effectiveness.

Effectiveness of boarding provision

Grade: 2

The boarding provision was last inspected in December 2008 and was judged to be good.

What the school should do to improve further

- Develop the progress tracking system to include more subjects and a means of determining whether lower-attaining pupils are achieving as well as their higher-attaining peers.
- Improve curriculum and lesson planning in the Early Years Foundation Stage to ensure that children are always supported in a way that helps them to understand as much as possible.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Pupils' standards are low, as is to be expected given the severity of their needs, but their achievement is good and has improved considerably. The achievement of a few higher-attaining pupils is clearly outstanding. For example, in English, they have made as much progress in a few months as is generally expected in two years for pupils of their ability. Pupils' achievement is confirmed by independent external evaluations and analyses of data, parents' views and analysis of daily class evaluations. The externally validated progress tracking system is good and provides some exceptionally useful information which the school is using in a thorough and innovative way. However, it is not finely tuned enough to record the tiny steps of progress of the lowest-attaining pupils in the same way, in order to inform judgement as to whether their achievement is as outstanding as that of their higher-attaining peers. Curriculum and personal targets are carefully written to be challenging but attainable, and evaluations show that pupils make good progress towards them.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good and the school is developing further ways of supporting it. For example, the school is currently working on helping pupils to make their views known. The pupils develop greater self-awareness than before, and an ability to relate to adults and to one another. Higher-attaining pupils express their likes verbally or by their actions, for example laughing with pleasure or stilling when they enjoy an experience. The school puts considerable effort into helping pupils feel safe, the results of which can be seen in outstanding relationships and the absolute trust that pupils have in staff. The curriculum and practices of the school support healthy living. Whole-school activities, such as assemblies and themed days, help pupils take part in and contribute to the school community. Increased use of the wider community and developing partnerships with other schools are very beneficial to pupils' overall personal development. The school supports pupils' cultural development effectively by visits and relevant activities, such as Countries Day celebrations. There is no bullying or harassment at Sunshine House and no racial incidents or exclusions. Behaviour is good, and any challenging behaviour is appropriately addressed. Attendance is satisfactory, but figures are affected by many pupils' frailty and ill health. There is no unauthorised or persistent absence. Parents say their children are safe, happy and enjoy school very much.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

An intense programme of performance management, staff training and coaching, together with new curriculum, planning and assessment systems, have improved teaching and learning considerably. Teaching is focused on meeting pupils' individual needs through well-planned activities that engage and interest them. Different forms of support for communication, such as electronic aids and signing, are used as needed and pupils show delight in making their contribution by vocalising or pressing a switch. Lessons incorporate therapists' advice and take full account of the targets set on pupils' individual education plans. Staff usually use resources and methods to support understanding and learning, such as explanations of tasks with the

use of sensory prompts. This was a weakness in the past and is now much improved, although the practice is not yet completely embedded. Staff are very sensitive to each pupil's abilities and disabilities and show great patience while they respond. Teaching assistants are vital, effective members of the class teams and contribute fully to teaching and assessment. Evaluations after each lesson are used effectively to assess pupils' progress and inform further planning.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The curriculum is planned well to interest and engage pupils. Its structure is simple and logical, and helps staff plan lessons that systematically build up pupils' skills, knowledge and understanding. The curriculum underpins the pupils' good progress. All planning incorporates learning outcomes in the form of challenging targets that help staff to focus teaching and learning in lessons. The curriculum emphasises communication and personal development, which are key areas for the pupils, but it includes all the required subjects. These are mostly taught through themed topics which enliven the curriculum and provide a rationale for enrichment, such as outings, assemblies and family days. The involvement of parents and the use of the community to support and enrich the curriculum have improved considerably in the past year. Lunchtime clubs have been recently introduced to support the school's work towards the Healthy School Award, and these are very much enjoyed by pupils and staff. Staff have rightly identified the need to further develop the curriculum and opportunities for enrichment and community involvement in the light of evaluations at the end of the first year.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

The staff show outstanding consideration for pupils' well-being. They work closely with therapy staff to ensure that pupils are safe, healthy, comfortable and have a means of communicating effectively. This may be by pressing a switch or simply with a slight up or down movement of the head or eyes. Robust procedures and practices, underpinned by relevant training, ensure that pupils are properly safeguarded. The contribution of the residential provision and its partnership with the school have strengthened. Pupils have their own targets when staying in the residence and, where possible, residential staff have copies of pupils' school targets and work in the classroom. The school gives pupils good guidance and support which are informed by the careful notes made of their achievements and expectations of progress determined by past performance. This system will automatically become further refined as more data are used in the twice-yearly analysis and it incorporates even smaller steps of progress. Partnership with parents is outstanding. Parents are fully involved in all aspects of their children's education and consulted frequently about the school's provision and development.

Leadership and management

Grade: 1

The school's managers systematically and robustly addressed the issues raised by the last inspection. Stability has been restored, governors are now very effective and clear about their role and responsibilities, and rigorous and robust systems have been implemented to judge the effectiveness of provision and so improve it. The school is using performance data to underpin the setting of good, challenging targets, and a clear, well-communicated direction has been

set for improvement and promoting the achievement and well-being of the pupils. Staff, including support staff, feel supported and empowered and enjoy their new responsibilities and working practices. The school promotes community cohesion effectively; the RNIB has a wide national and international brief, and Sunshine House is becoming increasingly involved in the local community and with other schools. The partnership with Grangewood is already mutually beneficial. Opportunities for continuous professional development for the staff of both schools have increased. The partnership has opened up many opportunities for both schools' pupils and parents, for example in the use of each other's facilities, and many joint ventures are planned. Eight Grangewood pupils will re-locate to Sunshine House in September, bringing staff with them. Parents are very pleased with the school's improvement.

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?	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?	2
The effectiveness of boarding provision	2
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	1

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

How effective is the provision in meeting the needs of children in the EYFS?	2
How well do children in the EYFS achieve?	2
How good are the overall personal development and well-being of the children in the EYFS?	2
How effectively are children in the EYFS helped to learn and develop?	3
How effectively is the welfare of children in the EYFS promoted?	2
How effectively is provision in the EYFS led and managed?	2

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	2
The standards ¹ reached by learners	4
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	2
How well learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make progress	2

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?	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
The extent to which learners enjoy their education	2
The attendance of learners	3
The behaviour of learners	2
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 learners' needs?	2
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?	2

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	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	2
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	1
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination eliminated	1
How well does the school contribute to community cohesion?	2
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
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**

21 May 2009

Dear Pupils

Inspection of RNIB Sunshine House, Northwood, Northwood, HA6 2DD

Thank you for welcoming me to your school earlier this week and for letting me come into your lessons. I came to your school to see how it was working and how well you are all doing, and I was very pleased with what I found. Sunshine House has improved enormously in the past year and it is a good school now.

The staff work very hard to keep you safe and healthy and to help you enjoy school and become prepared for your future. They work very closely with therapists to make sure that you are comfortable and can communicate in a way that suits each of you best. The new managers have developed many of the school's systems so that you enjoy learning and make much more progress than previously. Well done! Staff give you an interesting range of things to do. I can see how much you enjoy the new activities like lunchtime clubs, the goodbye song in the hall and fun days. I like the way that lessons are planned to meet each individual's needs and the way that staff explain to you exactly what you will be doing and with which member of staff.

I have asked the school to improve two aspects of its work. These are to:

- track the progress you make in all subjects as effectively as is done in English, mathematics, science and personal development, and make sure that each tiny little step of progress in all subjects can be included in the records
- make sure that staff, particularly those in the Early Years, use physical and sensory resources to help you to understand as much as possible.

With my very best wishes

Yours faithfully

Judith Charlesworth Lead Inspector