

Highfield School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	108311
Local Authority	Wakefield
Inspection number	337053
Inspection dates	23–24 March 2010
Reporting inspector	Marian Thomas

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	11–17
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	147
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr Gordon Watson
Headteacher	Mr A Spalding
Date of previous school inspection	27 November 2006
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by two additional inspectors. The inspectors visited 12 lessons taught by 11 teachers and spent 65% of inspection time observing learning. They held meetings with governors, staff, groups of pupils and health care professionals. They observed the school's work, and looked at curriculum planning documents, teachers' analysis of pupils' progress and safeguarding documentation. They also took into account the views of 78 parents and carers who returned questionnaires to the inspection team.

- pupils' work in mathematics in the classroom
- how well the curriculum is adapted to the meet the needs of all learners
- the progress of different groups of pupils
- how members of the governing body support the school.

Information about the school

The school is situated within the town of Osset. Pupils who attend come from a wider catchment area which includes Wakefield. They have a range of needs including moderate and severe learning difficulties, challenging behaviour, communication needs, sensory impairment and autism. Almost all pupils are of White British heritage with only a small number from other backgrounds, none of whom is at an early stage of learning English. The proportion of pupils entitled to free school meals is above average. Several are in the care of the local authority. In 2008, the school became part of the Education Ossett Community Trust. The school received specialist status for cognition and learning in 2007.

Inspection grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory, and 4 is inadequate

Please turn to the glossary for a description of the grades and inspection terms

Inspection judgements

Overall effectiveness: how good is the school?

2

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

2

Main findings

Highfield is a good school which deserves its good reputation with parents and carers, and the community. Their views are reflected well in the comment:

'My child's confidence has grown amazingly since starting at Highfield.'

The headteacher and senior leaders have high expectations of what pupils can achieve and ensure the quality of provision necessary for them to do so. The leadership's evaluation of the school's effectiveness is accurate and rigorous, and findings are acted upon to good effect. The school's strength is its ability to recognise and support the diverse needs of all pupils. This ensures barriers to learning are minimised. Since the last inspection the school has achieved specialist school status, demonstrating through this process a good capacity to improve further.

Pupils make good progress in their personal development and grow in confidence as they move through school. This is as a result of excellent care, guidance and support. Pupils thoroughly enjoy school. Most are clear about how to stay healthy. Their behaviour is good and they feel safe. Excellent links with outside agencies ensure pupils are well prepared for the next stage of their education.

Teaching is good in most subjects and is based on clear assessment of pupils' learning needs. Overall, progress is good. However, in a small number of lessons the pace is too slow which results in pupils making less progress. All groups of pupils, including those with severe learning difficulties and pupils who are looked after by the local authority, make equally good progress. Across the school, pupils' progress in mathematics is less good than in English and science.

A detailed assessment system has been introduced since the last inspection. This ensures that monitoring and tracking of pupils' progress is more effective. As a result, teachers plan learning and set targets which increase pupils' progress. Behaviour is managed well both in and outside the classroom. Teaching assistants provide a good level of support in most lessons. However, in some lessons observed they lacked direction and the quality of support was reduced. The curriculum has continued to improve since the last inspection, with new partnership initiatives enriching learning. The welfare of learners is given the highest priority and attendance is good.

Senior managers are effective in moving the school forward. The committed and supportive governing body visit school regularly and are effective in monitoring its work and holding senior leaders to account. Partnerships with local organisations are well established and pupils have a good understanding of the local community. However, global links to promote pupils' understanding of life in a multi-ethnic community are less strong. All staff know pupils exceptionally well and are sensitive to the circumstances in

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their lives which make them vulnerable.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve achievement in mathematics across the school so that it is in line with English and science:
 - by improving the quality of monitoring of pupils' progress in mathematics
 - by ensuring staff are effectively deployed in mathematics lessons to maximise support for learning.
- Increase the pace of learning in some lessons to ensure learning time is used to the full in all lessons throughout the school day.
- Further develop global links in order to promote pupils' understanding of life in a multi-ethnic society.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

2

Pupils arriving at school settle quickly because of the friendly and welcoming atmosphere. This allows staff to assess their needs and provide individual learning programmes. These enable pupils to work consistently and achieve well in most areas of the curriculum. This was demonstrated particularly well in an outstanding life skills lesson, which focused on creating a bog area in the wildlife garden. Students worked exceptionally well together demonstrating excellent teamwork and problem-solving skills. Given the nature of pupils' learning needs, this was impressive. Skilful questioning by the teacher supported pupils and promoted their independent-thinking skills. Staff set achievable targets for pupils in all key stages. These coupled with the removal of barriers to learning, enable pupils to make good progress. However, pupils' progress in mathematics is less good than in English and science. The school has identified that progress is slowest in the number and calculations element of the mathematics curriculum. Although school leaders have good plans to improve the targeting of resources, these are as yet not fully implemented.

Pupils in Key Stage 4 engage well with learning because staff are particularly good at building up their self-esteem. This, coupled with a good range of academic and vocational courses offered, ensures that pupils leave with many qualifications and accreditations. Last year's school leavers successfully passed examinations in art, English, mathematics, science, information and communication technology, physical education and humanities. They also gained vocational qualifications in motor vehicle maintenance, horse riding and stable management, and firefighting.

All pupils who attend school have a statement of special educational needs. Many have learning difficulties and some have a diagnosis of autistic spectrum disorder. As a result, attainment for the majority of pupils is well below national expectations. Because the needs of individual pupils are recognised and are well supported, all groups make similar good progress.

Pupils feel safe because they know staff are supportive and help them at all times. They

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enjoy school immensely. As one pupil commented: 'Staff really care here and help me with my life'. Many pupils recognise the importance of eating healthy meals. For example, they were knowledgeable about which foods were healthy and which were not, noting that school dinners often fell into the latter category. Physical education and sport are strengths of the school and have been developed through the educational trust to which the school belongs. Many pupils enjoy the sporting opportunities offered and appreciate the part this plays in a healthy lifestyle. Pupils make a good contribution to the community both in and outside school by listening to and appreciating the needs of others. For example, pupils are currently involved in a community project with a local home for the elderly. This has helped to increase pupils' understanding of the needs of others. Pupils' good overall spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is seen in the way in which they react to each other and take care of the environment.

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	2
Taking into account: Pupils' attainment ¹	*
The quality of pupils' learning and their progress	2
The quality of learning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress	2
The extent to which pupils feel safe	2
Pupils' behaviour	2
The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community	2
The extent to which pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	2
Taking into account: Pupils' attendance ¹	2
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2

How effective is the provision?

¹ The grades for attainment and attendance are: 1 is high; 2 is above average; 3 is broadly average; and 4 is low.

* In some special schools inspectors do not make a judgement about attainment in relation to expectations of the pupils' age.

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Information and communication technology is used well in lessons to support learning and involve pupils in making choices. Teachers use assessment information well to inform pupils of their targets. As a result, pupils' progress is consistently good in most areas of the curriculum. Planning of lessons is conscientious and attention is given to ensuring work is modified to meet the different needs of pupils within the class. However, in a small minority of classrooms the pace of the lesson is too slow and time at the end is not used effectively, for instance, to check on how well pupils have learnt. This reduces learning time. Support staff are well deployed in some lessons. In the learning support unit they often take the lead in delivering quality learning. However, in some lessons, particularly in mathematics, they lack direction and do not support learning sufficiently well.

The curriculum is well organised and is imaginatively enhanced by many visits and activities away from the classroom. For example, Key Stage 3 pupils visited a local bakery. This was then used as a focus for writing and developing enterprise skills. Residential visits to a variety of locations help develop pupils' independence. A range of academic and vocational courses are offered. These include courses in rural studies and life skills. Together they contribute well to students' development and future economic well-being.

As a result of outstanding care, guidance and support, pupils feel there is always someone who will listen and help. One pupil with learning difficulties expressed this well by saying: 'I feel really safe here. Everyone helps me.' A careful and thorough assessment is undertaken when pupils arrive at the school, which is then used to target support effectively. Vulnerable pupils are exceptionally well supported and this is helped by the excellent links with outside agencies. Transition arrangements are securely in place and are well supported by strong links with 'Connexions' advisors.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The quality of teaching	2
Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	2
The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships	2
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	1

How effective are leadership and management?

The reflective and visionary leadership of the headteacher and senior leaders is moving the school forward and ensuring good outcomes for pupils. This, coupled with excellent partnerships forged through the school's membership of an educational trust, is driving improvement further. The school's governing body has implemented strong procedures to ensure the health and well-being of all pupils. Members offer valuable support to the school and challenge to senior leaders. Policies and procedures ensure all government

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safeguarding requirements are met and that practice is of a good standard. Leaders and managers have ensured that the school is a highly inclusive community. Equality of opportunity and the tackling of discrimination within school are good. Through its specialist school status, the school has built successful and innovative links with the local community. However, links with the global community are less strongly developed and, as a result, pupils' understanding of life in a multi-ethnic society is not as well developed.

The school makes great efforts to engage all parents and carers. The work of school staff ensures they are kept well informed about their child's successes. Daily diary links with home are in place and as a result, parents value the work of the school. Excellent partnerships with a wide variety of agencies contribute significantly to pupils' well-being and progress. The school ensures good outcomes for pupils, many of whom have significant needs. It does this on a well controlled budget and provides good value for money.

These are the grades for leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	2
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	2
The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met	2
The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers	2
The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being	1
The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	2
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	2
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	2

Views of parents and carers

Of the 78 questionnaires returned, 90% agreed or strongly agreed that the school met the needs of their children well. Many made positive comments about the strength of support given to themselves and their children. During the inspection a parent contacted the inspection team and raised a past safeguarding issue. After investigation, the team concluded that the school had acted strictly in accordance with local authority guidelines and had taken appropriate action to ensure the future safety of all children.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Highfield School to complete a questionnaire about their views of the school.

In the questionnaire, parents and carers were asked to record how strongly they agreed with 13 statements about the school.

The inspection team received 78 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 147 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	49	64	26	34	1	1	1	1
The school keeps my child safe	55	71	21	27	1	1	0	0
The school informs me about my child's progress	43	56	29	38	3	4	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	36	47	36	47	3	4	1	1
The teaching is good at this school	45	58	30	39	1	1	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	42	55	28	36	6	8	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	33	43	39	51	3	4	0	0
The school makes sure that my child is well prepared for the future (for example changing year group, changing school, and for children who are finishing school, entering further or higher education, or entering employment)	40	52	33	43	1	1	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	49	64	26	34	2	3	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	46	60	26	34	1	1	0	0
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	38	49	36	47	0	0	1	1
The school is led and managed effectively	48	62	27	35	0	0	1	1
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	51	66	23	30	3	4	0	0

The table above summarises the responses that parents and carers made to each statement. The percentages indicate the proportion of parents and carers giving that response out of the total number of completed questionnaires. Where one or more parents and carers chose not to answer a particular question, the percentages will not add up to 100%.

Glossary

What inspection judgements mean

Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	These features are highly effective. An outstanding school provides exceptionally well for its pupils' needs.
Grade 2	Good	These are very positive features of a school. A school that is good is serving its pupils well.
Grade 3	Satisfactory	These features are of reasonable quality. A satisfactory school is providing adequately for its pupils.
Grade 4	Inadequate	These features are not of an acceptable standard. An inadequate school needs to make significant improvement in order to meet the needs of its pupils. Ofsted inspectors will make further visits until it improves.

Overall effectiveness of schools inspected between September 2007 and July 2008

Type of school	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Nursery schools	39	58	3	0
Primary schools	13	50	33	4
Secondary schools	17	40	34	9
Sixth forms	18	43	37	2
Special schools	26	54	18	2
Pupil referral units	7	55	30	7
All schools	15	49	32	5

New school inspection arrangements were introduced on 1 September 2009. This means that inspectors now make some additional judgements that were not made previously.

The data in the table above were reported in The Annual Report of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills 2007/08.

Percentages are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100. Secondary school figures include those that have sixth forms, and sixth form figures include only the data specifically for sixth form inspection judgements.

Common terminology used by inspectors

Achievement:	the progress and success of a pupil in their learning, development or training.
Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
Capacity to improve:	the proven ability of the school to continue improving. Inspectors base this judgement on what the school has accomplished so far and on the quality of its systems to maintain improvement.
Leadership and management:	the contribution of all the staff with responsibilities, not just the headteacher, to identifying priorities, directing and motivating staff and running the school.
Learning:	how well pupils acquire knowledge, develop their understanding, learn and practise skills and are developing their competence as learners.
Overall effectiveness:	<p>inspectors form a judgement on a school's overall effectiveness based on the findings from their inspection of the school. The following judgements, in particular, influence what the overall effectiveness judgement will be.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">■ The school's capacity for sustained improvement.■ Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils.■ The quality of teaching.■ The extent to which the curriculum meets pupil's needs, including where relevant, through partnerships.■ The effectiveness of care, guidance and support.
Progress:	the rate at which pupils are learning in lessons and over longer periods of time. It is often measured by comparing the pupils' attainment at the end of a key stage with their attainment when they started.

This letter is provided for the school, parents and carers to share with their children. It describes Ofsted's main findings from the inspection of their school.



25 March 2010

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Highfield School, Ossett, WF5 9BS

Thank you very much for making us so welcome when we visited your school. It was lovely to meet you all and to hear how much you enjoy coming to school. We send a special thank you to those of you who gave up lunch-time activities to talk to us. We agree with those of you who told us you think school is good.

These are the things we liked the most:

- the friendly welcome everyone in school gives to visitors
- the excellent way in which staff care for you and help you to make future choices
- the way in which you all work hard and achieve a good range of qualifications
- the wildlife garden that you have all worked so hard to create.

In order to make your school even better we have asked your teachers to:

- ensure you all work even harder in mathematics so that more of you achieve your targets
- make sure you all make the best possible use of lesson time
- make sure you have the opportunity to gain a better understanding of the lives of different people both in Britain and in other parts of the world.

Yours sincerely

Mrs Marian Thomas

Lead inspector

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