

Hillside School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	114687
Local Authority	Brighton and Hove
Inspection number	338424
Inspection dates	3–4 February 2010
Reporting inspector	Anne Duffy HMI

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	4–16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	55
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Cllr Steve Harmer-Strange
Headteacher	Mr Robert Wall
Date of previous school inspection	14 November 2006
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and one additional inspector. Inspectors spent the large majority of their time looking at learning; this included observing 12 lessons or parts of lessons and 10 teachers. Inspectors also held meetings with staff, governors, including parent governors, and pupils. They observed the school's work, and looked at documentation and policies, including the school's tracking of pupil progress, the school improvement plan and the recent audit of safeguarding. They also studied pupil and staff questionnaires and the 26 questionnaires returned by parents and carers.

The inspection team reviewed many aspects of the school's work. It looked in detail at the following:

- the progress made by all pupils as shown by tracking and analysis of data as well as observation
- the contribution made by changes to the curriculum to pupil outcomes, including the opportunities to gain accreditation and develop the skills needed for adult life
- the impact of the school's links with the wider community (including partnerships)
- arrangements for safeguarding.

Information about the school

Hillside is a special school for pupils with severe or profound learning difficulties. A growing proportion of pupils, currently around 25%, are on the autistic spectrum and around 30% have additional medical needs. Around 75% of pupils are of White British background and approximately 7% are looked after by the local authority. Since the last inspection the school has taken over responsibility for the sensory needs service within the authority. It also provides outreach support for pupils with severe learning difficulties and physical and medical needs in mainstream schools. After-school childcare is available on the school premises but this is not managed by the governing body and is inspected separately.

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?

1

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

2

Main findings

Hillside School is an outstanding school in which pupils' enjoyment is reflected in the excellent progress they make in their personal development. This is supported by the outstanding care and guidance that they receive and the very strong relationships that exist with parents and with other partners. As one parent put it, this is a school 'which celebrates all those little achievements in a huge way'.

As a result of reorganisation within the local authority, the leadership of the school has had many demands placed upon it. Demonstrating very effective self-evaluation, the school has responded positively to all opportunities. New posts and responsibilities have been created across the staff group and there is a strong sense that the school's aim to 'work together as a dynamic team' is being fulfilled. The school's work with other partners to enhance experiences for its own and other pupils is outstanding. Outreach to other schools and to parents ensures that its influence upon the local community is strong. All these developments are undoubtedly taking the school in the right direction, although the added responsibility of providing external services means that the headteacher spends more time out of school than at the time of the last inspection. Nevertheless, capacity for sustained improvement is good.

All groups of pupils achieve well academically and very well personally and socially, regardless of ethnicity or gender. The very large majority make good progress in their work and for some this progress is outstanding. Changes to the class groupings and the curriculum have been extremely effective, and the reorganisation of subject leaders is well conceived. However, some subject leaders are relatively new to the role so are yet to have maximum impact in ensuring that teaching and learning are as good as they can be in all lessons. The strong focus upon individual targets is paying dividends in improving pupils' social skills, self-help skills and behaviour, but some whole-group teaching of topics has yet to ensure that intended learning outcomes are achieved to as high a standard.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Ensure that pupils' achievement in their learning matches the high level of other outcomes by:
 - extending further the roles and responsibilities of subject leaders in monitoring topic-planning and delivery
 - ensuring that the intended learning outcomes for lessons are clearly expressed and used consistently as a means of evaluating pupil progress in group, as well

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as individual, work.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

1

Pupils make good progress through the 'P levels' and the early levels of the National Curriculum. In the Early Years Foundation Stage children also make good progress in their learning. Across the school each pupil's individual targets are known and worked towards by all involved. Progress against these is tracked in careful detail and pupils are challenged to try new things so that they develop resilience within a safe environment. For example, pupils who were at first hesitant enjoyed experimenting with ice, and were able to make predictions about what might happen next, with great enthusiasm. The school makes good use of information available to it in order to moderate its judgements about pupils' progress in their learning. While it can show that there is little significant difference between different groups, it acknowledges that there is a slight imbalance between individual progress recorded in learning and that shown in other outcomes.

Pupils thoroughly enjoy school and any absence is invariably for medical reasons. Pupils' behaviour overall is outstanding. Those who on entry find it difficult to manage in a group, respond well to the school's approach and build up excellent relationships with staff. One boy told inspectors, 'I know what they don't like and that's violence. When I came here I was a bit violent, but I'm not now.' It is clear that pupils know what is expected of them and as a result they are very tolerant of one another. Pupils show that they have trust in the adults working with them so that they feel extremely safe. Those with high levels of physical and medical need are not deterred from taking part in physical activity which both challenges and engages them fully. Carefully planned diets, coupled with close working with parents and carers, support healthy lifestyles outstandingly well.

Members of the school council, playground monitors and the elected head boy and head girl take their responsibilities very seriously. Pupils are able to take part meaningfully in their annual review meetings through a recently devised 'pupil voice' system and they are keen to express their views over many individual and whole school matters. Contributions made by pupils on inclusion links with neighbouring schools, including contributing to awareness training for brothers and sisters, show them as excellent ambassadors for disability. Older pupils particularly enjoy the experiences provided by the partnership with a nearby independent school, which offers good opportunities to develop the more mature social skills which they will need in later life.

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

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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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	1
Pupils' behaviour	1
The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles	1
The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community	1
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?

The school rightly made the decision to adjust the curriculum in order to more fully meet the needs of the changing pupil population. The changes, which began in the primary groups in 2008, have been extended very successfully into the secondary department. This approach meets pupils' special educational needs more consistently than before, most notably for those pupils with autistic spectrum disorder. The imaginatively designed curriculum is enhanced by a wide range of enrichment activities, including participation in community creative arts events. Opportunities to learn alongside others at neighbouring schools are particularly beneficial for pupils who are working at a higher level than their classmates for some subjects. Older pupils are benefiting from increased opportunities to gain accreditation and the school is taking appropriate steps to ensure that these are extended even further where this would benefit individuals.

Teachers know their pupils extremely well and the focus upon individual target work, supported by skilled teaching assistants, ensures that excellent progress is made across many areas of personal development. In the topic based, whole-group lessons, progress is slightly less secure because there is sometimes too much emphasis placed upon pupils' success in doing, rather than learning. Group lessons are generally well planned, but this tendency to plan activity rather than learning outcomes makes it harder for teachers to assess and record progress in these sessions. Nevertheless, all staff are committed to promoting pupils' independent learning and every contribution is valued. As one pupil reported, 'The school helps me do things for myself.'

The exemplary arrangements for the care, guidance and support of pupils reflect the school's drive to remove barriers wherever possible. A strong commitment to work with

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a range of agencies to sustain the learning, development and well-being of every pupil is evident. From the very early stages, each potential hurdle is addressed positively and parents speak movingly of times when the school has 'gone that extra mile' to support them and their families. Pupils' physical development, their communication and social skills are supported extremely effectively by the multidisciplinary team within and around the school.

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	1
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	1

How effective are leadership and management?

The school's strong commitment to equality of opportunity and its drive to keep moving forward is evident in the way in which it has embraced new challenges without losing sight of the needs of its own population. In striving to deliver the most relevant and appropriate education for all its pupils, the senior leadership team has taken full advantage of the opportunities offered by the excellent partnerships that have been established. The leaders and managers have a very good understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the school and have taken strategically focused actions in order to ensure its future development. While the expansion of its role within the authority has occasionally demanded a lot of those in leadership roles, the strong staff team has ensured that changes have been implemented smoothly. Some middle leaders are relatively new to subject leadership and are not all fully involved in monitoring the quality of teaching and topic delivery. However, they are committed to fulfilling their role well and a shared ambition for the pupils is highly evident and effective at all levels. The school is highly cohesive, and plays a significant role in its local community. It rightly plans to extend further its engagement with the wider world where this will be of benefit to all. Parents appreciate the steps which the school takes to make sure they are involved, saying, for example, 'We are always kept abreast of developments and our opinions sought prior to any changes.'

Financial management is rigorous and the school has used its resources very well to improve and enhance pupils' learning opportunities. Arrangements for safeguarding are secure and there is much high-quality practice. The school recently carried out an audit of safeguarding, which revealed that in one or two areas procedures had not met its own very high standards. It has taken swift action to improve these and the excellent care received by the pupils has not been affected. Governors have a clear understanding of the school's strengths and areas for development. They are well informed and provide

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strong challenge and good support.

These are the grades for leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	1
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	1
The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being	1
The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	1
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	1

Early Years Foundation Stage

The small group of children whose age places them within the Early Years Foundation Stage are taught in mixed classes with slightly older children so that their special educational needs may be most appropriately catered for. As a result achievement is good overall and children make good progress. Routines are well established and this enhances children's feeling of safety in and around the school. They form good relationships with staff and benefit from the close attention paid to their physical needs. There are many elements of good provision. Individual progress against targets is well supported by effective intervention from teachers, teaching assistants and other professionals within the school. Activities provide good challenge and good use is made of resources to support these. However, opportunities for teaching to extend learning through play and the outdoor environment, key elements of Early Years Foundation Stage provision, are slightly inconsistent due to the spread of these children across three different classes within the school.

Leadership and management of the Early Years Foundation Stage are good. Leaders are aware of the restrictions which the current groupings may place upon the children and are rightly considering if anything more can be done to address this.

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These are the grades for the Early Years Foundation Stage

Overall effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
Taking into account:	
Outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
The quality of provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
The effectiveness of leadership and management of the Early Years Foundation Stage	2

Views of parents and carers

Questionnaires were returned from almost half of the school's parents and carers and their response reflects the views formed by inspectors. The high level of satisfaction felt by parents and carers, and their appreciation of the support it offers both them and their children, was reflected overwhelmingly in the comments made. The following statement sums up the views of many: 'Ever since my son started at Hillside, I have felt that he is well cared for and that his learning and development are supported and encouraged. I feel part of a team (school, child and family), working together to give him the best experiences and opportunities possible.'

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Hillside 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 26 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 55 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	21	81	5	19	0	0	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	23	88	3	12	0	0	0	0
The school informs me about my child's progress	22	85	4	15	0	0	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	18	69	7	27	0	0	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	21	81	5	19	0	0	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	22	85	3	12	0	0	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	21	81	5	19	0	0	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)	16	62	7	27	0	0	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	20	77	6	23	0	0	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	18	69	5	19	0	0	0	0
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	21	81	5	19	0	0	0	0
The school is led and managed effectively	25	96	1	4	0	0	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	24	92	2	8	0	0	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.



5 February 2010

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Hillside School, Portslade, BN41 2FU

Thank you for helping us to learn about your school. We really enjoyed our visit. It was good to meet so many of you and see how well you are doing. I am writing this letter to tell you what we found.

We think your school is outstanding. You told and showed us that you enjoy school a great deal. You are safe and very well cared for and you are doing well in your classes. We were pleased to see how hard you are all trying to make sure your behaviour is as good as it can possibly be. The new way that teachers, and all the other people who help, are working with you is making a difference. We were pleased to see how well you were doing with your targets and how much progress you make by the time you are ready to leave. There are plenty of interesting things for you to do both in and out of school. It is good that many of these include your families. We enjoyed hearing about the visits you make to other schools and we agree that the work that you do there helps you to improve in your learning and your other skills.

Your headteacher and deputy headteacher lead the school very well and all the staff work hard to help you. Thank you to all your parents and carers who filled in one of our questionnaires. We agree with those who said that the school does a really good job, but we have suggested that even more could be done to make sure that you all make as much progress as you can, especially when you are doing topic and group work. The teachers who are in charge of different subjects can make sure that this is happening. You can help by trying your best. I hope that you will all do well in the future.

Yours sincerely

Anne Duffy

Her Majesty's Inspector

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