

# Torfield School

## Inspection report

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	114690
<b>Local Authority</b>	East Sussex
<b>Inspection number</b>	338425
<b>Inspection dates</b>	16–17 September 2009
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	Anne Duffy HMI

This inspection of the school was carried out under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

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<b>Type of school</b>	Special
<b>School category</b>	Community special
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	4–11
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	63
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Mrs Georgina Sexton
<b>Headteacher</b>	Mrs Jean Mockford
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	6 February 2007
<b>School address</b>	Croft Road Hastings East Sussex TN34 3JT
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## Introduction

This inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and two additional inspectors. The inspectors visited eight lessons, and held meetings with governors, staff and pupils. They observed the school's work, and looked at documentation including pupils' work, the school's planning, records and policy documents as well the newsletter. They also considered 44 questionnaires from parents and carers, 37 from pupils and 41 from staff.

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

- The progress made by all children and pupils.
- The quality of teaching and teaching support, including the use of assessment to support learning.
- The contribution made by curricular and extra-curricular opportunities to pupil outcomes, including laying the foundations for adult life.
- The effectiveness of leadership and management, including performance management and CPD, in ensuring accountability, embedding ambition and driving improvement across the school.
- Arrangements for safeguarding.

## Information about the school

Torfield is a special school for pupils with autism, communication and associated learning difficulties. Most pupils are of White British background and boys outnumber girls by nine to one. The school has two sites: the main site, for pupils from Year 2 to Year 6, and the nurture centre, which includes pupils in the Early Years Foundation Stage, Year 1 and a small number of Year 2 pupils. Pupils join the school at different ages and stages of their school career, some having had previously negative experiences of education.

**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?**

**3**

**The school's capacity for sustained improvement**

**2**

## Main findings

Torfield is a satisfactory school which meets the behavioural and social needs of its pupils well. Support, guidance and care are strong and a creative curriculum ensures that pupils enjoy their education. 'I like everything', reported one little girl.

The school's good capacity for sustained improvement is evident in many areas. The headteacher and senior leaders have led the school through a period of rapid change as it has developed to meet the needs of its increasingly complex population. It has gained accreditation from the National Autistic Society, becoming the first school within the local authority to do so. Demonstrating effective self-evaluation, the school has worked hard to improve the environment for learning and increase the skill of all staff in meeting the behavioural, social and communication needs of pupils with autistic spectrum disorder. As a result, pupils' progress in personal development is good. This is recognised by one pupil who said, 'I have learnt to be a mature boy.'

Pupils' attitude to learning is good. Overall, their achievement is satisfactory. The increasingly detailed tracking system used to monitor pupils' progress indicates that those who join the school in the nurture centre make more rapid and consistent progress in their learning than elsewhere in the school. This is because learning is broken down into small enough steps to support good progress for every pupil and staff work well together with a common purpose. The quality of lessons is more variable at the main site. A range of targets is set for each pupil but the focus on behaviour and social skills sometimes overshadows other areas. As a result, pupils, and the staff supporting them, are not always clear about what each one is going to learn rather than do in each lesson.

All staff have worked hard to create an exciting curriculum and a safe, attractive learning environment for their pupils. Shared ambition to create outstanding provision across the two sites is evident and well established. The leadership and management teams, together with the relatively new learning leaders and specialist teaching assistants, are committed to providing equal opportunities for each of their pupils. In this, they have achieved notable success with individual pupils who have previously found school difficult. However, there is more work to be done to ensure that all staff contribute equally to high quality teaching so that all pupils learn well and make as much progress as they can in every lesson.

## What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Increase the number of lessons in which pupils make good or outstanding progress by:

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- streamlining the process of target setting so that short-term targets are clear and used by all concerned, including the pupils themselves, to challenge and support learning
- ensuring that lesson objectives always make clear what pupils will learn, rather than what they will do.
- Extend the good practice already evident in some parts of the school by:
- ensuring that the monitoring and evaluation of teaching is consistent at all levels and includes teachers' own evaluation of how well their lessons have had an impact upon pupils' learning.

**Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils****3**

Overall, pupils make satisfactory progress in their learning. They consistently make the most progress in personal and social education. Individual attainment varies according to the starting point and ability of each pupil. For the large majority, levels of attainment are below average but a few pupils reach levels that are equal to those expected nationally. The school has taken effective action to ensure that girls are not disadvantaged by their relatively small number. Pupils, as well as their parents and carers, are positive about the difference that Torfield makes to their attitude to school and learning. As one parent wrote, 'Torfield is the best thing that happened to my child since she started full-time education.' Children in the Early Years Foundation Stage, and the Key Stage 1 classes in the nurture centre, make greater strides in their learning than those in the main school. While this is due, to some extent, to greater consistency in teaching and assessment, it also supports the school's view that early intervention is most effective in meeting the particular needs of these children.

Pupils thoroughly enjoy school. From the very early stages of their education, they demonstrate pride in their achievements and there is a very real sense of shared pleasure when a new skill is mastered. Pupils move safely around the different areas of the school and have confidence in every member of staff. As a result, they feel secure in a range of situations and are increasingly willing to attempt new tasks with diminishing anxiety. They rightly recognise that school helps them to improve their behaviour. Older pupils know who they can go to if they have a problem. Inspectors witnessed this in action when one boy came determinedly into the headteacher's office, rightly confident that she would listen to his point of view because what he was feeling at that time was 'very important'.

Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. It is enhanced by interesting artistic and cultural events as well as music assemblies which pupils join in with gusto. Pupils make full use of the range of sporting opportunities available both within and outside school, including using the swimming pool and the outdoor play equipment. Reflecting the school's Healthy School and Activemark awards, pupils demonstrate that they understand how to lead healthy lifestyles. Many of them enjoy the well-balanced lunches that are provided. Those who prefer to bring their own food respond well to the school's encouragement to bring fruit and vegetables instead of crisps and sweets. Pupils at both sites enjoy growing their own vegetables. The many

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social opportunities are underpinned by good progress in information and communication technology and satisfactory progress in mathematics and literacy. As a result, pupils develop skills that will support them when they are older. With a few exceptions, they attend regularly; well-planned transition as they start school means that even the very newest pupils enter happily and with confidence.

*These are the grades for pupils' outcomes*

<b>Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning</b>	<b>3</b>
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attainment <sup>1</sup>	4
The quality of pupils' learning and their progress	3
The quality of learning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress	3
<b>The extent to which pupils feel safe</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>Pupils' behaviour</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>The extent to which pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being</b>	<b>3</b>
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attendance <sup>1</sup>	3
<b>The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development</b>	<b>2</b>

## How effective is the provision?

Lessons are usually enjoyable and pupils respond well to opportunities to join a group or use a range of interesting resources. Good use is made of visual timetables to ensure that pupils know what they are going to do and to support them in taking responsibility for moving on to the next task. Pupils experience a mix of listening to the teacher, responding to questions and opportunities to work independently. This, along with good strategies to manage pupils' behaviour, means that pupils are generally attentive and display good attitudes to learning.

Teachers' assessment of pupils' learning and progress over time is thorough. Staff use this information well to identify pupils who need additional intervention. Day-to-day

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

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assessment is weaker. This means that, in some lessons, group work is not pitched at exactly the right level to ensure individual progress. There is sometimes an overemphasis on 'good sitting' or 'good listening' and pupils become restless. When this happens, teaching assistants are used to keep pupils on task in a group rather than work with them individually and so opportunities are missed for extending individual progress. Staff know pupils very well. However, sometimes too much reliance is placed upon the individual views of teachers, rather than lesson plans and evaluation, to measure how well pupils are doing in lessons.

The creative curriculum has been used well to enhance pupils' motivation to learn, to cope with new situations and to speed up their progress in English, mathematics and science. Pupils' development of communication and social skills is supported well by speech, language and communication programmes. Whole school topics such as 'feasts and festivals' introduce pupils well to other lives, cultures and experiences. The range of activities in school and off-site contributes very well to pupils' development and well-being. There are good opportunities for them to work together with school staff and with outside agencies. Pupils enjoy joining others from neighbouring mainstream schools in projects such as the Butterfly Sparkle Music Festival.

Staff work hard to provide effectively for the needs of pupils who are more vulnerable or who find it very difficult to behave well. The school has strong evidence to show that this has a significant impact upon the future life-chances of many of its pupils. Where appropriate, pupils are prepared well for a move to mainstream school.

*These are the grades for the quality of provision*

<b>The quality of teaching</b> Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	<b>3</b>
	3
<b>The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The effectiveness of care, guidance and support</b>	<b>2</b>

## How effective are leadership and management?

Realistic self-evaluation, led by the headteacher, has helped the school to address identified areas for development well. The very real impact is evident in the improvement in the enhanced environment and in the progress made by pupils in the areas of social skills, communication and behaviour. The learning leaders are emerging as an increasingly strong element. Their input into school improvement has yet to have its full effect because they are not fully involved in the regular monitoring of teaching and learning. The school works very effectively with a range of partners to guide pupils and support their families. This reflects the school's strong commitment to equality of opportunity for its increasingly complex school population. The school provides high levels of professional development and training for its own and other staff. Resources

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are used appropriately to achieve value for money.

The governing body provides a satisfactory level of challenge and has a clear understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the school. Governors undertake their duties diligently and have supported the school well through a period of change and development. They recognise that the next steps are to ensure increased consistency in monitoring teaching, learning and progress at all levels. Arrangements for safeguarding are good and reflect the school's emphasis upon providing good pastoral care and a safe environment.

The school's contribution to building a cohesive community within and beyond its own population is strong. The outreach team is well used by other schools. The leadership team are aware of the difficulties faced by parents who live some distance away, and use a variety of means, including very informative newsletters and meetings, to keep them in touch. Both parents and professionals value the information the school provides about autistic spectrum disorder. Through the targeted efforts of the school, many pupils have overcome significant social and communication difficulties and are able to participate increasingly well in family and community, as well as school, life.

*These are the grades for leadership and management*

<b>The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement</b>	<b>3</b>
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	3
<b>The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money</b>	<b>3</b>

**Early Years Foundation Stage**

Children enjoy their time in the Early Years Foundation Stage and make good progress overall. Their welfare is given a high priority and carefully planned transition means that children settle quickly and well. Routines are well established and this increases children's feeling of safety in and around the centre. As far as possible, they develop an



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awareness of healthy lifestyles because their diet and exercise programmes are monitored closely. Children's personal development is good, and for some it is outstanding. This is because staff form very effective relationships with the children, manage them thoughtfully and are committed to creating a range of opportunities for them. Staff encourage children to express their feelings and ideas as far as they are able and each contribution is welcomed and respected. Consequently, children feel valued and develop trust in those working with them. Given their range of needs, children's behaviour is good. They gradually develop an awareness of others and an understanding of what is expected of them. The carefully planned approach to communication supports different aspects of language development successfully.

Leadership and management are good. The school has responded thoughtfully to the requirements of the Early Years Foundation Stage curriculum, adapting it appropriately to suit the needs of the children. Record keeping is thorough and children's progress is closely observed. However, targets, plans and records are not always linked in a way that ensures that the best possible progress is being made.

*These are the grades for the Early Years Foundation Stage*

<b>Overall effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage</b>	<b>2</b>
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**

The overwhelming majority of parents and carers are positive about the school. Within these positive returns, the number of those who strongly agree that their child is safe and enjoys school was higher than those who strongly agree that their child is making good progress. This reflects, to some extent, the emphasis placed on these different aspects within the school. However, the strong parent and carer satisfaction is reflected in a few of the comments made: 'He is a changed child, more included now he is here'; 'Staff give children a stable, calm, environment; 'The school is like a big family' and 'My son has made amazing progress.'

## Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Torfield 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 12 statements about the school.

The inspection team received 44 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 63 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	32	73	12	27	0	0	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	35	80	9	20	0	0	0	0
The school informs me about my child's progress	30	68	11	25	1	2	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	23	52	15	34	0	0	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	33	75	8	18	0	0	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	26	59	16	36	0	0	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	25	57	14	31	1	2	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)	26	59	10	23	1	2	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	34	77	10	23	0	0	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	29	66	12	27	1	2	0	0
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	31	71	11	25	0	0	0	0
The school is led and managed effectively	32	73	10	23	0	0	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	33	75	8	18	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

	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
Type of school	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"><li>■ The school's capacity for sustained improvement.</li><li>■ Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils.</li><li>■ The quality of teaching.</li><li>■ The extent to which the curriculum meets pupil's needs, including where relevant, through partnerships.</li><li>■ The effectiveness of care, guidance and support.</li></ul>
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.**



18 September 2009

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Torfield School, Hastings TA34 3JT

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 to see how well you are doing. I am writing this letter to tell you what we found.

Torfield is a satisfactory school which guides and cares for you well. You all seem to enjoy school; you are safe and very well cared for. We could see that you and the staff have all worked very hard to improve your communication and this has helped you to behave better and to learn more. There are plenty of interesting things for you to do both in and out of school. The school council told us about the good ideas that they have had and we were pleased that these have helped to make things better for everyone. It was good to see how much you enjoy using the spaces you have to play and grow things in.

Your headteacher and all the staff work hard to help you. We think that it is important that everyone who works with you helps you to learn as much as possible, as well as keep you safe. We have asked the teachers to look at the way they plan their lessons and keep records so that everyone, including you, can see clearly how well you are doing. We have also asked that all staff think about the best ways of making sure you all learn as much as you can in lessons. This means that different people may visit your class from time to time to see what is happening and how well your lessons are helping you to learn.

We hope that you will all try your best and wish you good luck for the future.

Yours faithfully

Anne Duffy

Her Majesty's Inspector

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