

# The Lindfield School

## Inspection report

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	114693
<b>Local Authority</b>	East Sussex
<b>Inspection number</b>	338426
<b>Inspection dates</b>	22–23 June 2010
<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>	11–17
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
Gender of pupils in the sixth form	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	72
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	5
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Sue Tait
<b>Headteacher</b>	Kirsty McIlhargey
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	11 July 2007
<b>School address</b>	Lindfield Road Eastbourne BN22 0BQ
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## Introduction

This inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and one additional inspector. Inspectors observed ten lessons or parts of lessons and eight teachers. They also held meetings with staff, a representative of the governing body, a parent and students, and spoke to a representative of the local authority and the School Improvement Partner. Inspectors observed the school's work and looked at documentation and policies, including the tracking of students' progress. They also looked at arrangements for safeguarding. They studied student 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 accuracy of the school's self-evaluation, and the degree to which this is a product of whole-school review and commitment
- the reasons for any difference in progress across different subject areas
- the extent to which teaching consistently meets the needs of all learners and is closing the gap between outcomes in different subjects
- the effectiveness of provision for students in Year 12.

## Information about the school

The Lindfield School provides places for students who have special educational needs and/or disabilities associated with autistic spectrum disorder (ASD), social, communication, and associated learning difficulties. It has seen an increase in the number of those with complex needs over the past three years. At the time of the inspection, 9% of the students were based mainly within the specialist department for ASD. The school has also been running a pilot provision for students in Year 12 who are not yet ready to move on to further education elsewhere. Most students are from White British backgrounds, with around 24 % from a range of other ethnic backgrounds.

The acting headteacher had been in post for one week at the time of the inspection.

**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?**

**4**

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

**4**

## Main findings

In accordance with Section 13 (3) of the Education Act 2005, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector is of the opinion that this school requires significant improvement because it is performing significantly less well than in all the circumstances it could reasonably be expected to perform. The school is therefore given a notice to improve. Significant improvement is required in relation to the leadership and management of the school, including governance.

The overall effectiveness of The Lindfield School is inadequate because key elements of its leadership and management have not been sufficiently robust, and systems have not been rigorous enough to ensure that all statutory requirements are met. The allocation and management of available resources are too reliant upon decisions made by one or two people, and processes for self-evaluation, including the performance management of staff, have been neglected. As a result, the school has not made adequate progress in addressing the areas for improvement identified at the last inspection and teaching, although satisfactory, is failing to make use of assessment in a way that supports learning to best effect. However, in other respects, the school makes satisfactory and sometimes good provision with some good outcomes. Good provision is made for the small number of students who remain at the school after the age of 16, and for those who attend the autistic spectrum disorder department. The school promotes students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development well; all students are well cared for and this is reflected in their feelings of safety and well-being. 'I so love this school,' one of them reported.

Working with the local authority and other partners, the school has appropriate plans in place to address weaknesses in key areas of its work and has already taken important steps towards improvement. Positive changes have been made to the senior leadership team, including the very recent appointment of the acting headteacher. New members have been found for the governing body, which is due to have its first meeting in a new format in the very near future. However, these actions, while positive, have been taken too recently to have had anything more than a superficial impact so far. As a result, while ambition to improve is now evident, capacity to do so is as yet unproved and is currently inadequate.

The curriculum meets the needs of the range of students adequately but opportunities to combine or deliver subjects creatively are often missed. As a result, although they make satisfactory progress overall, some students, particularly those of lower ability, are not always engaged in a way that ensures that they achieve their best. This is due in part to a weakness in teachers' use of assessment which restricts students' opportunities to play an active role and take responsibility for their own learning. Inconsistent use of

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assessment and evaluation of progress on a day-to-day basis limit the accuracy with which lessons are planned and teaching targeted to different abilities. Some teaching has significant strengths. However, at present, not all staff contribute equally to high quality teaching so that all students learn well and make as much progress as they can in every lesson.

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

- Develop and implement whole-school systems and processes for evaluating and monitoring all aspects of the school's work.
- Ensure that the governing body fulfils its statutory obligations and establishes a clear system of accountability, monitoring, and allocation of resources in order to achieve improved value for money.
- Agree and implement a whole-school approach to planning for and evaluating students' progress in lessons.
- Consider and implement ways in which different subjects can be combined or taught in a way that makes learning more interesting and exciting for all.

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

Achievement overall is satisfactory. Students generally make satisfactory progress, and some make good progress. Those who attend the autistic spectrum disorder facility make the most consistently good progress; this is in response to provision which is well tailored to their needs. All students last year achieved at least one GCSE pass, which is slightly above the national average, and some students gained additional individual GCSE or Entry Level accreditation. Post-16 students make good progress, both in their learning and in the development of their personal and social skills. Learning is at its best when students are involved in activities which both stretch and interest them. For example, older students maintained their attention throughout an art lesson where they were supported and encouraged in trying things out for themselves and evaluating the outcome. Younger students were less engaged in lessons where the activities were not sufficiently interesting or challenging, such as being required to complete worksheets or cut out, stick and paste pictures.

Students thoroughly enjoy school and this is reflected in their above-average attendance. Older students communicate confidently about the skills that they have gained and are keen to demonstrate them. Behaviour both in lessons and around the school is good and students are very tolerant and supportive of one another. They show that they have trust in the adults working with them so that they feel safe. They are aware that there might be bullying and are clear about what would be done to deal with it. All aspects of healthy living, including issues of sexual health, are dealt with sensitively so that students are able to take these on at a pace that suits them.

The varied menu is appreciated by the students; inspectors were very impressed by the complete lack of interest that the school council members showed in biscuits when fruit and vegetables were also on offer.

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Students enjoy the many opportunities they have to contribute to the school and the wider community. They talk enthusiastically about the next 'Lindfield's Got Talent' event and those organising the school disco take their duties very seriously. The elected school council members make a very positive contribution in drawing up the 'Pupils' Charter'. Further afield, students represent the school in dance and music festivals, perform at the local theatre and achieve well in the Youth Games events. As the acting headteacher rightly says, 'They are great ambassadors for special needs.' All classes have been involved in the healthy eating project, and enterprise skills are developing as students consider extending their vegetable patch and renting an allotment. Older students further develop work-related skills through the strong links that the school has with local colleges, but have been rather restricted this year by the school's difficulty in finding work-experience places.

*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>2</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>	2
<b>The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development</b>	<b>2</b>

## How effective is the provision?

Teachers generally display secure subject knowledge and in many cases they use resources effectively. There is some very strong teaching. In the best lessons, teachers

<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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plan a range of challenging activities for students and support them in making good progress. For example in mathematics and in design and technology, students respond positively to well-paced activities which involve them effectively both individually and in groups. However, this is not always the case. The accuracy with which teachers use what they know about students' attainment to plan to meet their needs is too variable, and ongoing in-class assessment is not used well enough either by staff or students. Teaching assistants are often left to keep students focussed on their work rather than playing an active role in lesson delivery or assessment. For those students with additional communication needs, the use of visual cues and signing is not consistent. This was an issue at the last inspection.

A curriculum based on a limited range of GCSE options and vocational link courses provides appropriate opportunities for students in Key Stage 4. For younger students, the curriculum is broad and balanced and supported well by a range of visitors and visits. However, little opportunity is taken to link subjects in cross-curricular topics or themes in a way that makes learning exciting. For example, students learning about slave trading in history were not given the chance to extend their thinking by exploring how they might feel in drama or by reading a relevant story in English.

The staff know students well and are committed to making their time in school a happy and positive experience. Students feel that they are listened to and are confident that in approaching staff with their problems, they would be dealt with sympathetically.

Arrangements for supporting transition for those joining and leaving the school are very effective and contribute well both to the well-being of new pupils and the success of post-school placements. It was evident during the inspection that students have respect for, and appreciate, the style of leadership and approach to relationships that the acting headteacher has brought with her. It is apparent that the already strong ethos of care and support has been strengthened further. As one pupil said, 'It's a bit different now, everyone is really good.'

*These are the grades for the quality of provision*

<b>The quality of teaching</b>	<b>3</b>
Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	4
<b>The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>The effectiveness of care, guidance and support</b>	<b>2</b>

## How effective are leadership and management?

The leadership and management of the school have been significantly affected by absence and by difficulties that the governing body has found in recruiting and maintaining members. Although the newly appointed acting headteacher has a very clear vision for the school's future, there is a great deal to be done if this is to be

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realised. A lack of processes and systems for evaluating the work of the school means that financial planning has not been sufficiently rigorous or linked appropriately to identified school priorities. Statutory obligations have not all been met, most particularly with regard to ensuring that all teachers' performance is appraised, and teachers and other staff have lacked the opportunity to review and further their practice in order to ensure continuing school improvement. However, all concerned are committed to fulfilling their role well and a shared focus on the needs of the students is evident, reflecting the school's commitment to equality of opportunity for its population. Arrangements for safeguarding are satisfactorily in place and reflect the school's emphasis upon providing good quality pastoral care within a safe and very attractive environment for learning.

The school makes appropriate use of the partnerships that have been established to guide students and support their families. It plays a notable role in its local and the wider community and has links as far afield as Rwanda which it uses to good effect to introduce the students to other ways of life. Staff are aware of the difficulties faced by parents who may live some distance away, and use a variety of means, including home-school books and informative newsletters, to keep them in touch. As one parent said, 'This school has always had a brilliant ethos.' The challenge now is to ensure that this ethos is built upon a solid infrastructure of management systems and enhanced by strong and effective leadership.

*These are the grades for leadership and management*

<b>The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement</b>	<b>4</b>
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	4
<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>4</b>
<b>The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money</b>	<b>4</b>

**Sixth form**



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Although this provision remains nominally a pilot, it is well led and effective and meets the needs of this vulnerable group well. Achievement for the students in Year 12 is good as a result of good teaching. Staff support students well so that they develop sensible attitudes and become increasingly mature in their approach to work. The very good development of their social skills is evident in their behaviour around the school and in the local community. Curriculum provision is well planned and students enjoy opportunities to take part in everyday activities such as preparing and cooking food as well as developing their enterprise skills.

Good use is made of link courses at local colleges to support students' interests and to prepare them well for the next stage of their lives. Through good partnership working at this level, staff help students to gain confidence so that they are able to be informed and suitably assertive when considering their plans for the future.

*These are the grades for the sixth form*

<b>Overall effectiveness of the sixth form</b>	<b>2</b>
Taking into account:	
Outcomes for students in the sixth form	2
The quality of provision in the sixth form	2
Leadership and management of the sixth form	2

## Views of parents and carers

The responses and comments made in the questionnaires reflect the generally high level of satisfaction felt by parents and carers. Some parents expressed concern about the impact that the lack of substantive leadership might be having upon the school.

Inspectors endorse the view that the recent appointment of the acting headteacher has been a very positive move. The overall appreciation of the support the school offers parents and carers and their children is represented by the comments of a parent who wrote, 'I have found the school excellent? especially in preparing for adulthood and the future. My child has grown up to be a very capable and mature young adult.'

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

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at The Lindfield 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 72 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	15	58	10	38	0	0	1	4
The school keeps my child safe	15	58	9	35	1	4	1	4
The school informs me about my child's progress	10	38	15	58	1	4	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	13	50	12	46	0	0	1	4
The teaching is good at this school	14	54	11	42	0	0	1	4
The school helps me to support my child's learning	14	54	10	38	1	4	1	4
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	12	46	14	54	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)	13	50	11	42	0	0	1	4
The school meets my child's particular needs	13	50	12	46	0	0	1	4
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	9	35	13	50	2	8	1	4
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	13	50	12	46	0	0	1	4
The school is led and managed effectively	9	35	15	58	0	0	1	4
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	18	69	7	27	0	0	1	4

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

Type of school	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Nursery schools	51	45	0	4
Primary schools	6	41	42	10
Secondary schools	8	34	44	14
Sixth forms	10	37	50	3
Special schools	32	38	25	5
Pupil referral units	12	43	31	14
All schools	9	40	40	10

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 is for the period 1 September to 31 December 2009 and is the most recently published data available (see [www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk)). Please note that the sample of schools inspected during the autumn term 2009 was not representative of all schools nationally, as weaker schools are inspected more frequently than good or outstanding schools.

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.**



24 July 2010

Dear Students

Inspection of The Lindfield School, Eastbourne BN22 0BQ

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.

It has been a difficult time for your school because your headteacher has been away and the governors, who help to run the school, have found it hard to do everything they need to do. We could see that you and the staff work very hard and you all want to do as well as you can. However, because the leadership and management have not been strong enough, we have judged that the school is inadequate and needs to improve.

These are some of the things that we think the school does well.

- The staff take good care of you.
- You are safe and told us that you are happy in school.
- Your behaviour is good, you consider other people, and learning about how different people live helps you to be caring and thoughtful.
- Students in Year 12 and in the ASD classes do well because the teaching and the things that they do are well matched to what they need.

These are the things that we have asked your school to do so that it will improve.

- Make sure that the governing body and the acting headteacher work with all the staff to check that they carry out all their duties as well as they can.
- Make sure that the teachers look at the way they plan and teach their lessons so that everyone, including you, can see clearly how well you are doing.
- Make sure that everyone thinks about the best ways of making lessons interesting and exciting so that you all learn as much as you can.

I hope that you will all try your best and do well in the future.

Yours sincerely

Anne Duffy

Her Majesty's Inspector

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