

Dove House School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	116626
Local Authority	Hampshire
Inspection number	338845
Inspection dates	22–23 June 2010
Reporting inspector	Stuart Charlton

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	11–16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	161
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mrs Glenys Howard
Headteacher	Mr Colin House
Date of previous school inspection	15 May 2007
School address	Sutton Road Basingstoke RG21 5SU
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by three additional inspectors. The inspectors observed all 23 teachers and monitored performance in 20 lessons. They held meetings with the Chair of the Governing Body, a parent governor, the School Improvement Partner, staff, parents and carers, and pupils. The work of the school was observed and the inspectors scrutinised the improvement plan, the minutes of the leadership team and governing body meetings, a range of other documentation and 35 questionnaires from parents and carers. The majority of pupils completed their questionnaires, and these were examined by the inspection team.

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

- the effectiveness of leaders and managers at all levels in meeting the needs and aspirations of all pupils and parents and carers
- the systems to monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of teaching and learning to determine if they are effective in ensuring that all pupils achieve as well as they can
- how well the curriculum provides a balance between meeting pupils' specific needs and their entitlement to an appropriate mix of academic, vocational and work-related provision
- the systems to set and track challenging targets for all pupils to determine if these are sufficiently focused to ensure that all make the progress of which they are capable.

Information about the school

Dove House provides education for pupils with moderate and severe learning difficulties, and behavioural, emotional and social difficulties, as well as for those on the autistic spectrum. Many have additional speech, language and communication difficulties. All have a statement of special educational needs. The school has a designated resource base for pupils with severe autism. The overwhelming majority of pupils are from White British backgrounds. The school has specialist status for mathematics and computing, and holds a wide range of awards including Sportsmark, Artsmark Silver, Healthy Schools and the International School Foundation awards. Since the last inspection, there have been significant increases in the number of pupils and staff. An outreach consultancy service has recently been established on behalf of the local authority. The school offers a wide range of extended services to pupils and their parents and carers.

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

1

Main findings

Dove House is an outstanding school. The care, guidance and support which all staff provide are exemplary, ensuring that pupils gain extremely high quality personal, social and learning skills. All pupils make excellent progress in their academic learning regardless of ethnicity, gender, special educational needs or communication needs. They gain GCSE qualifications that provide an excellent basis for their future and every year all move on to further education. These achievements are based on teaching and learning of the very highest quality. There are rigorous and robust systems in place to set challenging targets and monitor pupils' progress. These give very high quality management information and show that Dove House outperforms most schools with a similar intake of pupils.

Safeguarding procedures are excellent and pupils indicate that they feel safe and secure at Dove House. Relationships between staff and pupils are exemplary and are a crucial factor in the school's success. Pupils thoroughly enjoy school and all say that lessons are fun. Attendance is excellent and, as one parent said, 'Once, I could not get him to come to school; now I couldn't stop him if I tried.' Behaviour is outstanding, and parents and carers speak about the school in glowing terms and the positive effect it has on their children. The curriculum is very carefully tailored to match pupils' needs, and the school quickly adapts its provision to meet the changing needs of its population. The school uses its specialism extremely well to promote the development of its own pupils and those in other mainstream schools.

Parents and carers are actively involved in their children's learning. The school's work with parents and carers to help them to understand and meet their children's needs is of very high quality and they are very positive about its effectiveness.

The headteacher provides the vision, commitment and determination to lead the school forward. He is extremely well supported by his deputy and the senior leadership team, and they have established highly effective teamwork between the teachers, support staff, administration staff and staff from outside agencies. The track record of development since the last inspection, the innovative strategies that have been implemented and the systematic way in which developments are monitored and evaluated by senior managers ensures that the school has excellent capacity to improve further. Governors are involved well in the life of the school but they have not yet received sufficient training that enables them to undertake an intensive examination of the school's performance. Partnerships with other professionals are used extremely well to promote the learning and well-being of pupils. An audit of the school's contribution to community cohesion has been completed which shows that links at local and international level are strong, but pupils do not yet have a strong understanding about

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life in other parts of the United Kingdom.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Ensure that governors gain the confidence and skills to provide the very highest level of professional challenge through further training so that they can work more effectively with individuals and year groups.
- Ensure community cohesion is promoted more effectively at a national level so that pupils have a better understanding about life in other parts of the country.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

1

Across the school, all pupils, regardless of their needs, make excellent progress and enjoy learning. By the end of Year 11, all pupils attain GCSE grades which are only slightly below those expected nationally. This represents excellent progress from pupils' well-below-average starting points on entry. Excellent learning was seen in all areas of the school. The consistent use of a wide range of communication techniques and behaviour management strategies enabled all pupils to make rapid progress in developing their communication skills. In an excellent design and technology lesson with Year 9 pupils, the teacher and the learning support assistants continually encouraged pupils to develop their literacy skills by using excellent phonic strategies. Similar techniques were observed in many other areas of the curriculum giving pupils access and familiarity with the technical language of the subjects being studied. Links with parents and carers are used extremely well to support pupils' learning. This is made more relevant to pupils because their academic targets, their individual action plans and the topics they will study are made available to parents and carers on a regular basis.

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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.

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Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	2
Taking into account: Pupils' attainment ¹	3
The quality of pupils' learning and their progress	1
The quality of learning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress	1
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	1
Taking into account: Pupils' attendance ¹	1
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1

How effective is the provision?

Teachers and all support staff work together extremely well as a team and have a seamless approach to behaviour management. Planning is very effective, but one of the school's many strengths is the detailed knowledge all staff have about their pupils. This enables everyone to make a crucial contribution to pupils' learning by clearly identifying the needs of individuals and how these will be met.

The curriculum is a strength of the school. It provides an excellent balance between pupils' needs and more practical and creative activities. The very wide range of sporting activities contributes extremely well to pupils' enjoyment of school. The school's successes, including representation at the forthcoming national girls' rugby championships and winning a number of regional trophies, are highly valued by pupils and a testament to the dedication and enthusiasm of staff. Other enrichment activities, such as visits to the theatre, museums and a local farm, add to pupils' enjoyment of school and link their learning to real-life experiences. A wide range of therapies, particularly speech and language and occupational therapy, enhance the provision and ensure that the range and complexity of pupils' needs are met extremely well.

Staff make sure that all pupils, including those who arrive at different times, settle quickly and happily into school life. Transition arrangements for those moving into the school and those who move to other schools are excellent and contribute extremely well to reducing pupils' anxieties. Through the highly effective systems to monitor pupils' progress even after they have left Dove House, the school is aware that many pupils on the autistic spectrum find difficulty in unstructured situations such as those they encounter at college. To address these needs, plans for a Year 11 Common Room are

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being developed.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The quality of teaching	1
Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	1
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 headteacher leads by example and gives a very clear sense of direction across the school. Consequently, everyone is clear about what needs to be done for the school to improve further, and staff approach key developments very enthusiastically. The governing body is very active in promoting the school and its aims. It has worked tirelessly to ensure that the quality of provision is such that the school is recognised as a leader in the local and regional community. To give a sharper focus in monitoring the school's performance, governors have identified that they need more training. Through its work, the school fully meets its commitments to the promotion of equality of opportunity for pupils with special educational needs, and tirelessly campaigns to eliminate discrimination. The school's self-evaluation is accurate and, as one member of staff said, 'Everyone associated with the school is passionate about ensuring that only the best is good enough for Dove House.' An excellent example is the development of the Learning Support Base for pupils with severe autistic needs. Through the school's outreach consultancy, the expertise of the staff in this base and across the school is used widely by mainstream primary and secondary schools.

Safeguarding and child protection are high on everyone's agenda and fully meet national requirements and guidelines. The risk assessments are a particular strength, being thorough and detailed. There are excellent links at local and international level through which the school promotes community cohesion. However, pupils have few opportunities to learn about life for those who live in areas where the racial and cultural mix is very different to that locally. The school has clear plans in place to address this issue.

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	1
The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met	2

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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	1
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	2
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	1

Views of parents and carers

Nearly one quarter of the parents and carers returned the questionnaire. The views expressed have been supplemented by using information derived from the school's own surveys. Parents and carers are overwhelmingly positive in their view that Dove House is an outstanding school. As one said, 'Dove House is an exceptional school.' Another stated, 'The staff are visionary and passionate about what they do and get the best out of everyone.' The inspection shows that such comments are well founded.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Dove House 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 35 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 161 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	28	80	7	20	0	0	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	31	89	4	11	0	0	0	0
The school informs me about my child's progress	28	80	7	20	0	0	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	31	89	4	11	0	0	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	32	91	3	9	0	0	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	31	89	4	11	0	0	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	31	89	4	11	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)	30	86	5	14	0	0	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	31	89	4	11	0	0	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	31	89	4	11	0	0	0	0
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	28	80	7	20	0	0	0	0
The school is led and managed effectively	32	91	3	9	0	0	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	32	91	3	9	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

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). 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">■ 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.



26 June 2010

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Dove House School, Basingstoke, RG21 5SU

Thank you for all the help you gave us when we visited you, even though many of you were taking examinations and preparing for the Prom! We particularly enjoyed being able to talk to a good number of you. You told us very clearly that Dove House is a brilliant school with an excellent headteacher. We agree and consider that you get the very highest quality teaching and curriculum so that you make excellent progress and gain a wide range of GCSE qualifications which prepare you extremely well for further education when you leave. All of you emphasised that staff are always ready to help you and that they make learning fun. You all said what a great difference the school makes to your lives. You told us that the small group sizes are a real help and that staff 'work us hard but they are cool'.

To make things even better, we want the school governors to have more training so when they come to work with you, they can be more focused in the support they give and are better able to show everyone how well Dove House performs. You showed us that you have very good understanding of the differences between Basingstoke and life in other towns and cities in Hampshire and between life in other countries in Africa. However, we also want you to gain more experience about what life is like in cities like London and have asked staff to develop better links to do this.

I know that you will all try your very best at all times to help the staff to make Dove House School even better.

Yours sincerely

Stuart Charlton

Lead inspector

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