

Stephen Hawking School

Inspection report

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|--------------------------------|------------------|
| Unique Reference Number | 131023 |
| Local Authority | Tower Hamlets |
| Inspection number | 341084 |
| Inspection dates | 17–18 March 2010 |
| Reporting inspector | Lynne Kauffman |

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

| | |
|--|---|
| Type of school | Special |
| School category | Community |
| Age range of pupils | 2–11 |
| Gender of pupils | Mixed |
| Number of pupils on the school roll | 76 |
| Appropriate authority | The governing body |
| Chair | Mrs Susy Gilvin |
| Headteacher | Dr Matthew Rayner |
| Date of previous school inspection | 6 March 2007 |
| School address | Brunton Place London E14 7LL |
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by two additional inspectors. Twelve lessons were observed and 11 teachers were seen. Meetings were held with a group of pupils supported by teaching assistants, with parents and carers, school governors, staff with a management role, teaching assistants, local authority officers, visitors to the school, therapists and health professionals. The inspectors observed the school's work, and looked at school policies, documentation generally, especially that relating to assessment, and scrutinised 30 parental and carer questionnaires.

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

- how the previous inspection issues have been addressed to impact on standards, achievement and well-being
- how teaching, therapy and health teams work together to give greater consistency in teaching and learning across the school
- how resource allocation is rationalised to meet changing need, externally and internally
- the implementation and monitoring of assessment strategies across the school
- how the school works with parents and carers to support their child's progress towards improved communication and independence.

Information about the school

The school is on a small site in a busy industrial area. The vast majority of pupils in the school have profound and multiple learning difficulties or multi-sensory impairments. Increasing complexity of need requires pupils to have one-to-one support and a significant number require medication or oxygen throughout the school day. An above average number of pupils come from families where English is an additional language. The school has gained awards such as Artsmark, Activemark, Quality Mark and Investors in People. It is a member of the Specialist Schools Trust.

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

Stephen Hawking School bases its whole ethos on the statement that 'Excellence is not a destination but a horizon'; foresight and ambition ensure a full entitlement to all aspects of education for its pupils. The school provides an outstanding education for everyone as a result of the dedication of the staff and their drive for improvement. Self-evaluation is rigorous and carefully assesses the impact on learners in all areas of the school's work. The school is lead by a dynamic and committed team of senior managers who approach their role with a passion for learning and a collaborative ethos. As a result, outcomes are outstanding, especially in the areas of personal development and independence. Pupils' behaviour and attitudes are excellent. A stunning feature of the school is the outstanding care, guidance and support the staff show to pupils and to each other. Parents and carers are integrated into the working of the school day. They are always welcomed and their views are taken seriously; as one parent mentioned, 'My son loves the school and so do I, we are listened to and the staff are excellent at every level.' This evidence and the school's vision points to the school's outstanding capacity for improvement.

Governors have developed a sensitive yet demanding working relationship with the school. Their mix of professional expertise and parental knowledge has been strengthened by focused training programmes. They are now able to ask challenging questions from a well-informed standpoint, so fulfilling their role as a 'critical friend'. Unfortunately, there is no business manager in the school at present, which puts undue pressure on the headteacher to deal with financial issues.

The high-powered, spirited work of the school's home liaison worker and the work of the outreach team criss-cross their way into the community. This ensures Stephen Hawking School is known and valued by the education community, the business community and those with environmental concerns. An exciting example of joined up thinking is the three-year plan of the Saturday siblings club and the school holiday clubs to capitalise on the Olympics taking place in London. The club leaders are helping pupils to build knowledge and understanding of the cultural diversity which is represented by the Olympics, eventually building up to the school staging its own version of the games.

Pupils' learning and independence is the drive behind all teaching. Planning and classroom teamwork is excellent and the integration of therapy and health professionals into the curriculum makes learning a total match to pupils' need. Learning is fun; the facial expressions and body language of all pupils illustrate how much they enjoy school. Provision for Early Years Foundation Stage is exceptional. The leadership enables all staff to be actively involved in planning and management. Early Years are a very happy

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team and parents and carers feel comfortable in spending time with their child in class. The main strength of their exciting topic-based curriculum is promoting confidence and independence for the family. As a result, children flourish and their progress is excellent. The ground-breaking work of the Early Years team with The Tower Hamlets Opportunities Group enriches pupils' learning through meeting new friends and also strengthens the school's local networks.

The key to the school's success is the energy and dedication of the school's exceptional headteacher. He provides a role model for the whole school. He values and respects the diversity of the team that makes Stephen Hawking School an exceptional place to be nurtured and to learn.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Consider extending the management team by appointing a business manager during the next school year, to release the headteacher from the business management role and allow him to concentrate on the school's overall development.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils**1**

Pupils are happy in school and they enjoy their learning. All pupils have carefully-devised individual targets which cover their social development, communication and motor skills. These are used in a very effective way. Despite at times being tired and perhaps feeling unwell, pupils concentrate well because of opportunities to take an active part in lessons. This is common practice across the school. For example, in one of the nursery classes, literacy through story time was about the bear that could not wake up. Teachers used exciting and challenging resources to stimulate interest. The multi-sensory experience was completed by tasting or smelling the honey that eventually woke the bear. Clear structures enabled all pupils to participate creatively and socially and have fun working together.

In a small group interview, pupils and their teaching assistant explained how happy they were in school. Pupils enjoy high levels of safety. They acted safely throughout all observed lessons and around the school. Positive comments from parents and carers and governors illustrate the attention to detail in all aspects of health, safety and hygiene that enable pupils to feel safe. Pupils know what is good for them. At snack time, picture exchange and signing ensured pupils made choices. Staff are very sensitive to the needs of those pupils who are tube fed and ensure they have interesting activities to avert their attention at snack and meal time. The excellent modelling of physiotherapy practice is rapidly picked up and used by teaching staff. This is further enriched through outdoor activities such as ice skating and sets a new challenge for pupils.

Attendance is good. It is above the local authority target for the school and is improving. The school has worked with the local authority to identify absences due to persistent illness or medical appointments. Many agencies are now based within the school, so

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reducing the need for external appointments.

The school regularly works with the local community to develop pupils' communication skills. This two-way process with other schools and local businesses helps pupils to develop confidence with less familiar surroundings. Every opportunity is taken to promote pupils' independence, including excellent arrangements for transition to secondary school, so preparing pupils for the next stage of their lives.

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

| | |
|---|----------|
| Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning | 1 |
| Taking into account: | |
| Pupils' attainment ¹ | * |
| 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 | 2 |
| The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development | 1 |

How effective is the provision?

A strength of teaching is the seamless way in which teachers, teaching assistants, therapists and health staff work together. They adapt and combine their skills to meet pupils' increasing range of needs; morale is high. Planning is excellent; it is well structured because the meticulous use of assessment identifies small steps for each pupil to help them towards their next stage of learning.

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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Assessment is continually under scrutiny and revised. In-house assessment systems are well established; alongside this, the school has introduced a strategy to compare the school's performance with national data. The excellent home school link book enables parents and carers to have a daily dialogue with the staff about how they can help their child at home. These records are continually refined to encourage parents and carers to have greater involvement in their child's education. Regular, daily observations and record keeping are consistently maintained, but the quality and content of written comments are variable. The school's good practice has been recognised nationally and reported in specialist educational publications. Teaching is never less than good and the majority of lessons are outstanding. Stunning teaching through exemplary planning explores a full range of relevant teaching and learning styles to sensitively drive learning. For example, Years 3'6 came together in a social activity where they enjoyed music and dance. Without exception, all pupils enjoyed the physical demand of singing and dancing, especially the rhythm of the music.

The curriculum is the tool that changes lives. The whole curriculum is planned around purposeful everyday life experiences to encourage pupils to be as independent as possible. For example, shopping that focuses going into the community, communication skills, using money and coping with different environments. The curriculum is broad, balanced and relevant to the needs of individuals and groups of pupils. It is a rich tapestry of all National Curriculum subjects that ensures an entitlement for all, interwoven with sensory, social and communication skills; this is further enriched through the work of therapists and health professionals. The curriculum design, together with pupils' individual plans, provides the basis for making realistic and regularly refocused targets.

Outstanding attention is given to ensuring the inclusion of vulnerable pupils. The school uses effective interventions, alternative curriculum models, information and communication technology, partnerships and involvement with outside agencies to match need. Time is used to its optimum to support and engage all pupils, including the structured break time.

All pupils receive the highest standard of care, guidance and support. Stephen Hawking is a highly inclusive school, where pupils do well, whatever barriers to engagement and learning they may face. The school has developed strong multi-agency working with teachers, support staff and therapists. There are a number of agencies based in the school or who come to the school to give medical support. For example, the optometrist and orthoptist visited school during the inspection to carry out eye examinations. The school doctor confirmed that this method of operating drop-in clinics reduces pupils' and parents' and carers' anxiety, and draws on a full range of input from professionals.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

| | |
|---|-----------------|
| <p>The quality of teaching</p> | <p>1</p> |
| <p>Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning</p> | <p>1</p> |

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| | |
|--|----------|
| 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 energy, determination and ambition of the senior leadership team are truly inspirational. High expectations of management at all levels, and the culture of rigorous professional development, illustrate a remarkable staff profile. All staff have a selfless commitment to provide the best and most up-to-date education, support and health care for all pupils at Stephen Hawking. Teaching and learning are thoroughly monitored by the senior leadership team; in addition, self-reflection encourages staff to extend their skills. A strong performance management programme is used to shape rigorous targets for all staff. This feeds into the school development plan and the professional development programme. The governing body has made significant developments in its strategic leadership of the school. Regular activities, such as the recent assessment training, plus more time spent within the school, are giving the whole team greater confidence to ask searching questions. Governors, in partnership with the school, have successfully worked through the issues from the previous inspection. Their profound insight into the strengths and few relative weaknesses of the school helps to shape its strategic development.

Through the outstanding work of the home school liaison worker, parents and carers are fully involved in the school and their child's education. The home school liaison worker meets with parents and carers to discuss their own needs, and successful courses are continually available for parent education. Partnerships to promote pupils' well-being are an intrinsic part of the school ethos. This was highlighted during the school's Investors in People review, showing how well the school promotes equality of opportunity by way of the carefully tailored individual programmes of support.

Safeguarding is part of the school's rigorous and caring systems. It is outstanding because the school takes all reasonable steps to ensure the health and safety of all pupils, completely fulfilling its statutory duties, for example safeguarding and policies relating to race equality and teaching religious education. Community cohesion is closely aligned with the school's Every Child Matters work. The school has excellent links within its local community, working closely with parents and carers, external agencies and local schools through its outreach programme. The school is working with a consultant; together, they are aiming for an award to celebrate the strength of their links locally, nationally and globally. However, this project is work in progress.

The deployment and use of resources is carefully monitored by the governing body. The school's financial systems have passed a recent review and there is rigorous attention to economy and self-help. At present, there is no business manager in the school and much of this work is covered by the headteacher, taking him away from his core role.

These are the grades for leadership and management

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| | |
|--|----------|
| 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 | 1 |
| 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 |

Early Years Foundation Stage

Children benefit from excellent teaching which enables them to make outstanding progress in relation to their starting points. Parent and carer comments are positive. They are clearly amazed at the rate of progress their child makes, in particular, those that join mid-term. The challenge of outdoor play and some freedom to choose activities has a huge impact on pupils' physical development and making friends, for example two local children's group visit the school weekly to take part in a joint structured play and exploration session. Assessment strategies use the Early Years Foundation Stage as a framework. Observation is focused and tracking is being consistently reviewed to ensure pupils are being well supported. Communication and independence are at the heart of all work in Early Years. An exciting themed topic approach provides a logical programme by blending the Foundation Stage Profile and the local authority inclusion document. The curriculum offers fun and engagement, supported by the dedicated work of the teaching and therapy teams. Their clear tracking of children's development through individual education plans and the annual reviews are used to engage parents and carers in setting future targets.

Care, guidance and support is outstanding. Teaching assistants make a key contribution to supporting each child. All welfare requirements are in place and often to greater training levels than are required.

The management of Early Years is exceptional. The approach is highly collaborative, but with each team member accountable for their work. There is a good balance of challenge and support. In addition, management seeks to share workplace skills brought by the diversity of the team to benefit the whole team. Evidence of rapid development is used systematically to evaluate and reset departmental targets. Early Years has

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excellent capacity for further improvement.

These are the grades for the Early Years Foundation Stage

| | |
|--|----------|
| Overall effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage | 1 |
| Taking into account: | |
| Outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage | 1 |
| The quality of provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage | 1 |
| The effectiveness of leadership and management of the Early Years Foundation Stage | 1 |

Views of parents and carers

The questionnaire returns and parents' and carers' comments made during the inspection show that a very large majority of parents and carers believe that Stephen Hawking is an excellent school. Parents and carers are very supportive of the school. They are pleased to be welcomed into the school and appreciate the way the school helps them to develop their role in their children's education. The home school liaison link has made a significant impact on bringing the parents and carers into the school, especially those who are new to the education system.

Parents and carers know the school sees their child as unique. They appreciate the school's work in bringing health professionals into the school for medical and physiotherapy appointments, which means access is much easier and makes less disruption to children's learning. A small minority of parents and carers felt the school did not respond to their concerns. However, inspectors checked this aspect of the school's work thoroughly and do not agree with this view. Parent and carer education through courses planned by the school is appreciated and well used. Similarly, the parents' and carers' room offers an opportunity for parents and carers to develop their own networks.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Stephen Hawking 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 30 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 76 pupils registered at the school.

| Statements | Strongly Agree | | Agree | | Disagree | | Strongly disagree | |
|---|----------------|----|-------|----|----------|----|-------------------|---|
| | Total | % | Total | % | Total | % | Total | % |
| My child enjoys school | 20 | 67 | 9 | 30 | 1 | 3 | 0 | 0 |
| The school keeps my child safe | 16 | 53 | 14 | 47 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| The school informs me about my child's progress | 16 | 53 | 13 | 43 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| My child is making enough progress at this school | 16 | 53 | 11 | 37 | 1 | 3 | 1 | 3 |
| The teaching is good at this school | 20 | 67 | 8 | 27 | 1 | 3 | 0 | 0 |
| The school helps me to support my child's learning | 16 | 53 | 10 | 33 | 3 | 10 | 0 | 0 |
| The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle | 16 | 53 | 10 | 33 | 2 | 7 | 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 | 53 | 12 | 40 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| The school meets my child's particular needs | 16 | 53 | 12 | 40 | 1 | 3 | 0 | 0 |
| The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour | 16 | 53 | 14 | 47 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns | 19 | 59 | 13 | 43 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| The school is led and managed effectively | 20 | 67 | 10 | 33 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school | 20 | 67 | 9 | 30 | 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.



21 March 2010

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Stephen Hawking School, London E14 7LL

Thank you so much for the time that Gary and I spent in your school recently. We really enjoyed seeing you at work and play and seeing how much you enjoy meeting new friends when we came into the Reception class while your visitors from Tower Hamlets were in school.

We saw many exciting lessons and particularly could see how much music and dance were favourite activities. The walls were covered with pictures of your faces showing how much you enjoyed the challenge and good fun of activities like the pictures of everyone ice-skating. Your teachers, teaching assistants, therapists, nurses and doctors work very closely with your parents and carers to make sure that you are happy and healthy. Many parents and carers said they were very pleased to see the excellent progress you are making.

You all work very hard and we thought long and hard about what would make your excellent school even better. We are leaving one area for the school to consider in the future:

- to consider extending the skills of the school management team by appointing a business manager to deal with the finances so that the headteacher has more time to concentrate on his main job.

Yours sincerely

Lynne Kauffman

Lead Inspector

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