

Seven Hills School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	135287
Local Authority	Sheffield
Inspection number	341632
Inspection dates	7–8 July 2010
Reporting inspector	Honoree Gordon HMI

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

Type of school	Special
School category	Community special
Age range of pupils	11–19
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in the sixth form	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	158
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	18
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr Bob Sawyer
Headteacher	Mrs Clare Scott
Date of previous school inspection	Not previously inspected
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and two additional inspectors. Inspectors spent time on both sites and observed 12 lessons. They saw 12 teachers. Meetings were held with senior staff on both sites, the headteacher, the Chair of the Governing Body and groups of students. Inspectors observed the school's work and looked at the school's self-evaluation and plans for development. They scrutinised documents, including samples of students' files and minutes of governors' meetings; records related to health, safety and welfare; and the school's data on achievement. Inspectors read 15 questionnaires completed by parents and carers and considered two further written comments received from parents. They also read questionnaires that had been completed by staff and by a small number of students.

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

- safeguarding and the school's records on health, safety and welfare
- the school's data on students' achievement
- the care provided for students
- how effectively the school operates across two sites
- how well the sixth form prepares students for leading independent lives.

Information about the school

Seven Hills school was formed in September 2008 from the amalgamation of two former special schools and operates on these two sites, which are four miles apart. The current headteacher took up post in September 2009. All students have a statement of special educational needs. Students' needs are wide-ranging. Most have moderate or severe learning difficulties, including specific needs on the autistic spectrum. There are no students whose main category of need is emotional, behavioural or social.

A small proportion of students have complex and multiple learning difficulties, including physical or medical needs. These students are educated on the site on Hemsworth Road, because the East Road site has many steps and so is unsuitable. The sixth form unit is also on the Hemsworth Road site.

In September 2011 the school will relocate to a new school as part of the Building Schools for the Future programme, where it will be co-located with All Saints Catholic High School.

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

3

Main findings

Seven Hills school is part-way on a journey that started with the amalgamation of two schools in 2008 and is leading up to the new school that will open in September 2011. The new headteacher and senior leadership team have good plans in place for this and are mid-way through implementing an appropriate, new staffing structure to take the school forward. The curriculum is satisfactory. A number of initiatives to enhance the curriculum are starting to show some impact on students' learning. The new school will allow some of the plans to be more easily realised. In their self-evaluation, the school's leaders graded all aspects of their work as good or better. Inspectors recognise that several important aspects are indeed good, but that work remains to be done on others. Throughout this period of significant change students' happiness and well-being have remained to the fore. Students are well cared for, they are keen to learn and their behaviour is good. Teaching is good, overall, though not consistently so. The sixth form is good: students grow in confidence, ready for the next stage in their lives. The school promotes their independence well.

A great deal has been accomplished in the last year. An accurate system for recording students' progress is now in place across both sites. However, its potential as a tool to help leaders monitor and analyse how well students are doing has not yet been fully exploited. As a result, there is insufficient evidence from the data to back up the school's view that the vast majority of students make good progress. Achievement and enjoyment are satisfactory overall. Many outcomes for students are good.

The challenges the headteacher faces in running a school over two sites are considerable. For example, in monitoring and evaluating practice and procedures, at times detail is overlooked in record keeping, or practice varies across the sites. Safeguarding policies and practice are satisfactory.

The school's capacity for further improvement is satisfactory. Members of the senior leadership team bring relevant experience and enthusiasm to the drive for improvement and are effectively harnessing the energies of those around them.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Develop further the use of the data that is collected about students' progress:
 - by leaders and managers, through closer monitoring, analysis and evaluation, to show more easily how well individual students and groups of students are doing and how this compares with other special schools nationally
 - by leaders and managers, to inform decisions taken on aspects of provision

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- by teachers, so that lessons are appropriately challenging, meet students' needs well and enable them to make good progress.
- Complete the implementation of the plans for enhancing the curriculum so that it meets students' needs more fully by ensuring that it is:
 - relevant and engaging
 - promoting good progress
 - providing a wider range of accreditation opportunities
 - promoting inclusion further, for example through increased opportunities for students to work alongside their peers from mainstream schools.
- Develop more robust quality assurance procedures to check that policies and procedures are being implemented consistently, for the next year across two sites, and thereafter in conjunction with the co-located partner school, particularly in matters related to safety and safeguarding, including:
 - instigating formal meetings of safeguarding staff to share information
 - compiling written risk assessments on students whose particular needs suggest that this is desirable.
- About 40% of the schools whose overall effectiveness is judged satisfactory may receive a monitoring visit by an Ofsted inspector before their next section 5 inspection.

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

Students' attainment is low, because of the nature of their difficulties. Learning and progress are satisfactory, with no obvious difference between particular groups of students. The school's data show that some students, though not yet the vast majority, make good progress. In lessons observed, notably where teaching was good or better, students' progress was frequently good. Really challenging lessons were based on good awareness of what individual students could already do, enjoyment was high and good progress resulted. The school's drive to promote literacy is showing some benefits, for example in improved reading skills. The school rightly judges that skills in mathematics need a similar concerted approach.

Students enjoy school and say that they feel safe. The school actively fosters their understanding of risk. The atmosphere on both sites is happy, though inspectors agree with students that on one site the buildings are shabby. Students are looking forward to going to the new school. Attendance is average. The school works hard with the families of students who persistently do not attend to encourage attendance.

Staff promote students' moral and social skills effectively, taking every opportunity to reinforce values, such as caring for one another or understanding right and wrong. The new school, being adjacent to a mainstream school, will offer additional opportunities for developing social skills to help prepare students for their future life.

Students benefit from a good range of extra-curricular activities and visits, including those involving sports, which foster a healthy lifestyle. This message is reinforced

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through food technology lessons. The school promotes independence well. For example, students follow a programme that allows them to become independent travellers.

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	3
Taking into account: Pupils' attainment ¹	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
The extent to which pupils feel safe	2
Pupils' behaviour	2
The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community	2
The extent to which pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	2
Taking into account: Pupils' attendance ¹	3
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2

How effective is the provision?

Teaching is good, overall, notably when lessons build well on students' prior knowledge and experience, and where activities and tasks are carefully matched to students' differing needs. This was evident in a good Year 8 literacy lesson, where students had individual cards with the sounds they needed to focus on as they followed an interactive programme. Others were reading, one to one with the teacher. Not all lessons relate as closely or successfully to students' current levels and so are less challenging. When assessment information was not being used sufficiently well to match activities to students, the pace of lessons slowed.

The school has reviewed its curriculum for implementation from September 2010. The curriculum is becoming more relevant to students' needs. Approaches that have been trialled successfully in some parts of the school are being extended, such as linking subjects through themes, to make lessons more exciting and promote students'

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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achievement further. An excellent example was observed in a Year 7 history lesson, where students were organising a project for a jousting tournament. They had to train staff to be knights and choose food for a medieval banquet. This outstanding lesson involved students with both moderate and severe learning difficulties animatedly reflecting in pairs on their approaches to the tasks. The teacher had successfully woven the development of several different skills into this theme, including social skills, independence and literacy. This lesson was a good example of the more imaginative approaches to curriculum that are emerging.

More-able students follow an accredited course (CLAIT) in information and communication technology. This demonstrates the high expectations the school has of its students. The range of accreditation for students' learning and the opportunities for inclusion through links with mainstream schools are currently underdeveloped, but the school has these priorities in mind as it moves forward.

The care, support and guidance provided for students are good; students enjoy school and their relationships with each other and with staff are warm and friendly. As a result, students feel secure and safe.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

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

How effective are leadership and management?

The headteacher, senior leaders and governors show good vision and determination to drive improvement. The senior leadership team is new but has relevant experience. Leaders can show some successful impact of initiatives, such as the drive on literacy. At the time of the inspection, only one middle leader had been appointed to the new structure as the appointment process for September 2010 had not yet finished. Consequently, initiatives for further improvement will be driven, for the most part, by senior leaders.

A single electronic assessment system operates across both sites. This records accurate information on students' progress. However, senior leaders do not yet have sufficient data at their fingertips to be able to say with confidence how well individual students are doing; how well particular groups are doing from their various starting points; nor how this compares with other special schools nationally. Leaders are ready to use the system in a more evaluative way, so that they can monitor progress more rigorously and use this information when making decisions on provision.

The governing body provides good support and challenge, but governors have not

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ensured that all statutory policies are in place. There is no written policy for the promotion of equalities and the tackling of discrimination. Nevertheless, inspectors found the school's practice in these matters to be good. The school helps individual students well to try to break down the remaining barriers to their learning.

The promotion of community cohesion is satisfactory, but planning for how this is to be developed is not yet sufficiently formalised. The school community is split over two sites and in some respects operates as two schools rather than one. Increasingly, through exchange of specialist staff, good practice is being shared. Record keeping and monitoring of how effectively policies and procedures are being implemented, for example in safeguarding and in health and safety, are not controlled from one central point. These are being delivered as two sites. At times inspectors noted inconsistent practice. The school is developing systems to evaluate the effectiveness of its actions to help safeguard students. Safeguarding procedures are satisfactory: the school works effectively with partners and agencies to support students.

The new staffing structure and development plans are appropriate to carry the school forward, but implementing these is not yet complete. For some staff this is very unsettling.

These are the grades for leadership and management

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

Sixth form

The sixth form is a strength of the school. Students make good progress. They increase their employability and develop independence skills very well through following a range of courses at local colleges and through work experience placements with local

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employers. Students develop responsibility and skills in working in teams, for example through enterprise activities. They designed a sensory garden as their social area. They maintain this, while also fundraising for the local young people's organisation that built the furniture.

Students' personal development is further fostered through taking on responsibilities in school, for example as accredited reading leaders, helping younger students. The care, guidance and support provided for sixth formers are good. Students are known well and carefully supported to obtain suitable college places successfully when they leave.

These are the grades for the sixth form

Overall effectiveness of the sixth form	2
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

Few questionnaires were returned. From those that were received, it is clear that the school enjoys the support of parents and carers. Two parents responded through the inspection contractor. One was very positive about the care that their child had received. The other was concerned that provision had not met their child's needs.

The inspectors discussed with the school how children with various needs, including medical needs, are supported. They looked at records related to exclusions and behaviour, and discussed the training programme for staff. These were in order. Inspectors cannot comment on individual matters between schools and parents and carers. Decisions on where best to place a child are taken by the local authority.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Seven Hills 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 15 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 158 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	12	80	2	13	0	0	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	11	73	3	20	1	7	0	0
The school informs me about my child's progress	11	73	3	20	0	0	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	8	53	6	40	1	7	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	7	47	8	53	0	0	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	9	60	6	40	0	0	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	10	67	4	27	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)	8	53	4	27	0	0	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	10	67	5	33	0	0	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	10	67	4	27	0	0	0	0
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	8	53	6	40	0	0	0	0
The school is led and managed effectively	10	67	4	27	0	0	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	11	73	4	27	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.



09 July 2010

Dear Students

Inspection of Seven Hills School, Sheffield S2 3PX

I am writing to thank you for your help when inspectors came to inspect your school recently, and to tell you what we found. It was good to see both parts of the school. You told us you enjoy school and that you feel safe. Your parents' and carers' questionnaires told us that they are happy with your school. A summary of our findings is listed below.

- Your school is satisfactory overall.
- Your learning and progress are satisfactory. You try hard in your lessons.
- The range of subjects and activities for you to do is satisfactory.
- Your behaviour is good.
- Teaching is good.
- The adults look after you well and give you good support.
- The sixth form is good; it really helps students to become independent.
- The school does a lot to help you be healthy and to help you keep safe.

Your headteacher has good ideas and plans for the school's future. We have suggested a few things for her to do to improve the school further, which are to:

- look at all the information about your progress on the computer to see if you could be making faster progress
- make sure all the checks on safety are done in the same way on both sites
- develop further some of the ideas about how subjects fit together, so that the lessons are exciting and useful to you.

I know you are all looking forward to attending the new school next year. I think it will be very exciting and a good opportunity to meet up with other young people.

Yours sincerely

Honoree Gordon

Her Majesty's Inspector

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