

Highbury School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	107591
Local Authority	Calderdale
Inspection number	356189
Inspection dates	14–15 September 2010
Reporting inspector	Alastair Younger

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	2–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	54
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mrs Anne Howarth
Headteacher	Miss Pam Sellers
Date of previous school inspection	28 September 2007
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by two additional inspectors. Eight lessons were observed being taught by seven different teachers. Discussions were held with senior staff and members of the governing body. Informal discussions were held with several pupils. Inspectors observed the school's work and looked at documentation relating to school improvement and self-evaluation, safeguarding and pupils' progress. The responses to 21 parent and carers' questionnaires were analysed.

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

- The extent to which all pupils are provided with equally challenging work, especially the most-able.
- The methods used to promote communication amongst pupils with limited speech.
- The quality of teaching, especially the methods used to meet the wide variety of need in each class.
- The impact of changes to the senior leadership team.

Information about the school

This is a relatively small school for pupils displaying a wide variety of special educational needs and/or disabilities. Most pupils have severe or profound difficulties and over a third have autistic spectrum conditions. About two-thirds of all pupils are White British, most of the rest are from a Pakistani heritage. About a quarter of pupils are known to be eligible for free school meals. The number of pupils on roll has grown considerably in recent years. Many pupils join the school other than at the usual time of admission.

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?

2

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

2

Main findings

This is a good school. It is well-led and managed and is popular with parents and carers, pupils and staff. It does some things outstandingly well. These include the safeguarding and care of pupils. Parents are greatly reassured by this.

Pupils make good progress because they are well taught. A significant amount of teaching is outstanding especially, though not exclusively, in the excellent Early Years Foundation Stage and in Key Stage 1. Teachers take great care to provide pupils with work that challenges them appropriately and gives all an equal opportunity to learn. The fine line between good and outstanding teaching is down to the effectiveness with which teaching assistants are briefed and deployed, and the allocation of time to different activities. Pupils enjoy coming to school, they work enthusiastically and behave well. They develop an excellent understanding of how to keep themselves healthy. Pupils attend whenever they can. Factors associated with their needs and disabilities impact on overall attendance, but attendance remains very close to the national average. The school forms a tight-knit, cohesive community but has only limited success in promoting community cohesion beyond its own locality.

The curriculum is good. An initiative to extend the curriculum into evenings, weekends and school holidays has been very successful. It has proved to be very popular and has contributed enormously to the school's engagement with parents and carers, which is outstanding. Almost a quarter of pupils access targeted lessons in mainstream schools. This increases opportunities for their learning and personal development and contributes to the outstanding way in which the school works in partnership with the many other agencies and professionals concerned with the care, well-being and education of children.

Senior staff and governors have a very clear awareness of the school's strengths and weaknesses. Issues raised by the last inspection have been tackled. Morale amongst staff is good and teaching continues to improve. Recent changes have strengthened governance. The senior leadership team has been extended and is functioning well. All of these factors contribute to the school's good capacity for ongoing improvement.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Capitalise on the incidence of outstanding teaching to extend excellent practice into areas where teaching is currently good, by:
 - putting in place a programme, whereby good teachers can observe and learn from practice that regularly results in outstanding outcomes, with a particular

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emphasis on the leadership and management of staff teams and the allocation of time to different activities.

- Extend the promotion of community cohesion into the broader community, by:
 - identifying ways in which the school can increase its contribution beyond the school and immediate locality and planning more comprehensively to show how these initiatives can be implemented and evaluated.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils**2**

The nature of pupils' special educational needs and/or disabilities means that it is inappropriate to compare their attainment with national expectations.

Pupils achieve well. They do so because they are well taught and enjoy learning. In lessons they behave well and work hard. All pupils want to do their best. They enjoy doing so because the tasks they are set are well matched to their interests and abilities and build steadily upon what they already know and can do. In about a half of all lessons observed, pupils made outstanding progress, reflecting the quality of teaching in those lessons. In no lessons was learning less than good. Parents and carers are very pleased with the progress they see their children making and pupils are proud of their achievements. A survey of last year's leavers found that there was 100% agreement amongst pupils, parents and carers that progress had been at least good during their stay at school. Many pupils exceed expectations, especially in mathematics and science. Occasionally, communication difficulties slow progress in English, but as staff develop increasing expertise in the use of aids to communication, such as signing and the use of picture prompts, this is gradually being overcome. There are very few differences in the achievements of different groups of pupils.

Pupils feel safe. Everything possible is done to ensure that this is the case and parents are totally reassured. The nature of pupils' needs and difficulties means that on occasion they do not fully understand what constitutes an unsafe situation, but they do know where to go to if they need help and they are taught about potential dangers. A simple way in which pupils demonstrate their first-rate understanding of healthy living was evident during the inspection was when pupils played gleefully and, where possible, energetically at break time, totally oblivious to the rain and wind, just enjoying the fresh air. They are also exceptionally well-informed about the importance of eating healthily and recognising when they need to alert adults to the fact that they are uncomfortable or not feeling well. Pupils can look forward to the future because their needs are being successfully tackled and they are acquiring valuable attributes and personal qualities.

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.

* In some special schools inspectors do not make a judgement about attainment in relation to expectations of the pupils' age.

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Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	2
Taking into account: Pupils' attainment ¹	*
The quality of pupils' learning and their progress	2
The quality of learning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress	2
The extent to which pupils feel safe	2
Pupils' behaviour	2
The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles	1
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 very rarely less than good. It is often outstanding. There is a core of teachers whose excellent practice can give a lead to others who aspire to this standard. Teachers are adept at catching the imagination and attention of pupils. They plan thoroughly and use a wide variety of good resources to engage pupils in learning, often through practical activities. Where teaching is at its best full use is made of the skills of teaching assistants to supplement their own efforts. Occasionally though, these assistants are not sufficiently well briefed or deployed to enable them to contribute to greatest effect. Time is usually carefully allocated to different activities, which are carefully matched to the needs of individuals. Teachers take care to recognise the small gains that pupils are making and this encourages them to keep on trying, safe in the knowledge of how well they have done and what they need to do to improve further. The extension of methods to aid communication is variable, but staff are becoming increasingly confident and competent in the use of signing and visual prompts.

The curriculum is well organised and contributes well to pupils' learning and development. It is well adapted by teachers to ensure that all pupils can benefit equally. Teachers are well aware of the importance of promoting basic skills across the whole curriculum and plan very effectively to do so. Enrichment activities have broadened in scope in recent years to include a greater range of much enjoyed activities, many of which contribute beneficially to pupils' sense of adventure. The introduction last year of a highly successful residential experience was the first time that many pupils had ever spent time away from their own homes and made a big contribution to their personal development.

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The quality of care, guidance and support is exceptional. All pupils receive carefully targeted support to allow them to make the best of their lives. Every pupil is recognised as an individual with special qualities and the staff relentlessly reassure them of their self-worth. Excellent relationships with parents and carers, including a 'text messaging' service, ensure that communication between home and school leaves no stone unturned in the provision of a seamless system of care, guidance and support for pupils.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The quality of teaching	2
Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	2
The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships	2
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	1

How effective are leadership and management?

The senior leadership team has been expanded in recent years to promote a greater sharing of responsibilities amongst staff. This has been a successful initiative, not only in the way it has contributed to school improvement, but also in the way it has furthered the ambitions of staff and contributed to planning for future changes in the leadership and management of the school. In addition to this, members of the leadership team are widely respected as outstanding teachers in their own right and thus well positioned to contribute to the development of teaching throughout the whole school. The governing body has undergone positive changes since the last inspection. It is well organised and utilises the strengths of individuals, such as accounting, to the benefit of the school. The governing body's involvement in the school's self-evaluation is increasing, through a programme of more formal visits, which are helping governors to see for themselves what goes on in the school rather than relying overly on what they are told by senior leaders.

Consummate attention is paid to the safeguarding of pupils. Excellent links are kept between the school, parents, carers and key agencies involved in ensuring the safety of children. Assessment of potential risk in any activity is thorough and rigorous; all staff and many governors receive regular training in safeguarding. A consistent approach to safeguarding and child welfare permeates all areas of school life without ever getting in the way of pupils' sense of fun and the creation of an enjoyable learning environment.

The school itself presents as a fully cohesive community. However, there is scope for it to contribute more to the cementing of an understanding of the religious, ethnic and socio-economic characteristics of the nation and within a global context .

The school promotes equal opportunities well. No group of pupils achieves in a radically different way from any other. There is no evidence of any discrimination and staff show a considerable awareness of the differing skills and talents of individual pupils.

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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	2
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	2
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	1
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	3
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	2

Early Years Foundation Stage

For many years the Early Years Foundation Stage has been recognised as a centre of excellence. This situation remains clearly evident. In an exceptionally well-led and managed environment, outstanding teaching is the norm, helping children to learn and develop with equal effectiveness. This, frequently inspirational, teaching captivates children, bringing out responses that demonstrate awareness and enjoyment. Children's welfare is strongly promoted, much to the relief of grateful and often anxious parents and carers. A bright and stimulating learning environment has been created, both indoors and out. Planning to meet the needs of individuals and the quality and perceptiveness of observation and assessment are highly skilled and effective. Many children are exceptionally dependent and this limits the degree to which they can lead their own learning through choice and exploration, but staff are very careful not to interfere when children do show signs of being able to cope for themselves and thus become more independent. The same, outstanding, quality of safeguarding, care and relationships with parents and carers as is seen throughout the school applies equally here.

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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

About a half of the parents and carers responded to a questionnaire sent out before the inspection and the responses were fulsome in their support of the school. There were exceptionally few criticisms. A very small minority of parents and carers said they would like more communication from school in electronic form. The school has looked into this possibility but found it impractical. Inspectors would encourage the school to keep the situation under review.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Highbury 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 21 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 54 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	19	90	1	5	0	0	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	18	86	3	14	0	0	0	0
The school informs me about my child's progress	15	71	6	29	0	0	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	13	62	7	33	1	5	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	15	71	6	29	0	0	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	11	52	7	33	1	5	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	15	71	6	29	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)	11	52	7	33	0	0	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	14	67	7	33	0	0	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	14	67	6	29	0	0	0	0
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	13	62	7	33	0	0	1	5
The school is led and managed effectively	15	71	4	19	2	10	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	16	76	5	24	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	58	36	4	2
Primary schools	8	43	40	9
Secondary schools	10	35	42	13
Sixth forms	13	39	45	3
Special schools	33	42	20	4
Pupil referral units	18	40	29	12
All schools	11	42	38	9

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 are for the period 1 September 2009 to 31 March 2010 and are the most recently published data available (see www.ofsted.gov.uk). Please note that the sample of schools inspected during the autumn and spring terms 2009/10 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.



16 September 2010

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Highbury School, Brighouse, HD6 3LD

We have asked staff to share and explain this letter to you if you need them to.

Thank you for making us so welcome the other day.

We enjoyed meeting you and seeing how much you enjoyed school.

We are happy that Highbury is a good school.

You are doing well because you are well taught, you work hard and behave well.

You are exceptionally well looked after and you are kept safe.

Your school is well led and managed; this means it keeps getting better.

Keep taking the fresh air it keeps you healthy.

We want to help the school to be even better.

We want even more of your teaching to be outstanding.

We want the school to see what it can do to make the world as good and as happy a place as Highbury.

All the best for the future.

Yours sincerely

Alastair Younger

Lead Inspector

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