

# Highshore Special School

Bellenden Road, Peckham, London, SE15 5BB

**Inspection dates** 26–27 February 2013

<b>Overall effectiveness</b>	Previous inspection:	Good	2
	This inspection:	<b>Good</b>	<b>2</b>
Achievement of pupils		Good	2
Quality of teaching		Good	2
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Good	2
Leadership and management		Good	2

## Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

### This is a good school.

- Pupils make good progress overall because of good teaching and a good curriculum.
- Pupils make very strong progress in developing their creative skills because of the expert teaching they receive in art, music and drama.
- The sixth form is good. Students at post-16 achieve well and enjoy an interesting and relevant curriculum that prepares them well for life beyond school.
- Pupils feel safe, are courteous and respectful of each other and of staff, and their behaviour in lessons is always at least good and often outstanding.
- The school leaders are driving forward improvement by regular checks on teaching, up-to-date training and rigorous setting of targets for teachers. Good teaching and achievement have been sustained at a time of significant change in the school's intake.
- The governors make a very strong contribution to the success of the school by their active support of the school leaders and their very good understanding of where improvement is required.

### It is not yet an outstanding school because

- A few teachers do not always set work at the right level for all the pupils.
- Teachers do not always provide opportunities in lessons, or written guidance when marking workbooks, to help pupils improve their writing.
- Long-term staffing difficulties in the mathematics department have slowed down pupils' rate of progress in the subject.
- A few pupils do not attend as often as they should, and this holds their progress back.

## Information about this inspection

- The inspectors observed 12 lessons taught by 11 different teachers.
- All of the lessons were observed jointly with a member of the school’s senior leadership team.
- Inspectors also heard pupils from different classes read in their lessons.
- Meetings were held with staff, pupils, members of the governing body, a representative from the local authority and parents.
- The inspectors looked at assessment information, statements of special educational needs, attendance information, the school’s development plan, the school’s monitoring information, a wide range of policies including safeguarding policies, and governing body documentation.
- There were no responses to the on-line parent questionnaire (Parent View) at the time of the inspection. The inspectors examined 21 staff questionnaires, which were taken into account by inspectors, along with the school’s own surveys of pupils’ and parents’ views taken in November 2012.

## Inspection team

Mick Megee, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Ann Sydney

Additional Inspector

## Full report

### Information about this school

- Highshore Special School provides education for pupils who have moderate or severe learning difficulties.
- Since the last inspection a much higher proportion of pupils has severe learning difficulties (nearly half) and an increasing proportion has additional difficulties such as medical needs (about one in five) and autism (about one in ten).
- All of the pupils have a statement of special educational needs.
- Over half the pupils are supported by the pupil premium (additional government funding for pupils known to be eligible for free school meals, looked after children, and children from service families). This proportion is well above average. There are no children from service families.
- A new headteacher has been in post since September 2010.
- The school makes use of alternative provision off site, with pupils and students accompanied by members of the school staff. Lewisham and Southwark Colleges are involved, as is the Thrive Horticultural Project.

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

- Make sure that all teaching is consistently good or better in all year groups by:
  - making better use of information on pupils' skills, knowledge and understanding in all lessons so that work is always at the right level for all the pupils
  - making sure that all teachers help pupils to know how to improve their writing by referring to their individual writing targets in all subjects during lessons, and by commenting upon spelling, punctuation and presentation when marking workbooks
  - resolving the staffing difficulties within the mathematics department through training or recruitment.
- Improve the attendance of the small number of pupils who are absent from school for long periods so as to raise their achievement.

## Inspection judgements

### The achievement of pupils is good

- Pupils' attainment is low because of their moderate and severe learning difficulties.
- However, the vast majority of pupils, including students in the sixth form, make good progress from their different starting points. Parents report that they are confident that their children are making good progress, often from a very low point.
- Progress in speaking and listening is strong. Pupils are encouraged to practise communicating throughout the day and in every subject. In this way, pupils become confident in articulating their ideas and feelings with classmates and staff.
- Progress in reading is good because of the effective, structured one-to-one support that the school provides. Pupils were heard to read aloud with confidence in many lessons.
- Progress in writing is less strong because teachers do not always sufficiently emphasise individual writing targets in all subjects, or correct presentation, spelling and punctuation in written work.
- Progress in mathematics is also slower, although still good, because the long-term staffing difficulties in that subject have lowered the quality of teaching.
- Pupils make very good progress in creative subjects such as art, music and drama because of the expert teaching in those subjects.
- All pupils leave with some form of meaningful qualification, and all move on to further education, training or employment.
- Pupils achieve well, irrespective of their disabilities or particular special educational needs. The school's records and lesson observations show no discernible variation between the overall progress of any groups of pupils, such as girls or boys, and pupils with moderate or severe learning difficulties, although those few pupils who attend less well make slower progress than others.
- The school has made sure that pupils who are eligible for pupil premium money, including those eligible for free school meals and those who are looked after by the local authority, make the same good progress in English and mathematics and reach similar levels of attainment in these subjects as other pupils at the end of Key Stage 4, as measured by their average point scores.
- The additional funds go towards the provision of speech, language and occupational therapists, and of a family support worker who maintains strong links with the families, enabling them to support their children in their learning at home.

### The quality of teaching is good

- Teachers, including those in the sixth form, mostly have good knowledge of their subjects and all teach with enthusiasm. Classroom staff give encouragement to the pupils at every opportunity.
- In the small groups, staff work well in their teams to develop gentle but very strong relationships with pupils, and treat the pupils with respect and kindness. All staff have received training on how to manage pupils who have difficulty in controlling their feelings.
- Most teachers plan their lessons well to provide interesting activities that are well matched to pupils' varying levels of ability. A few teachers are not so skilled in this because they do not make full use of the school's progress information, and set tasks that are either too hard or too easy for some pupils.
- Although teaching and learning in writing are generally good, some teachers miss chances to move pupils on in their writing throughout every lesson. These staff do not refer to writing targets often enough in lessons or point out, when marking workbooks, how pupils can improve their presentation, spelling or punctuation. As a consequence, pupils do not know what they need to do to be successful writers.
- Most teachers use a good variety of resources, approaches and methods, including new technology such as interactive whiteboards and laptops. In the best lessons, activities are pitched exactly at the right level for each individual and changed quickly so that pupils do not

become restless but display very positive attitudes and make excellent progress.

- For example, in a literacy lesson, pupils learned new skills rapidly because the teacher had planned a set of activities customised for each pupil that took full account of their individual starting points. Pupils were fully occupied and challenged throughout, and received constant encouragement from the staff. They said that although it was not their favourite subject, they were really enjoying the lesson.
- Although pupils make good progress in mathematics, their rate of progress is not as fast as in other subjects because teachers' subject knowledge is not as strong.
- In the sixth form, teaching is good and sometimes outstanding. Teachers move learning along at a fast pace and make good use of visits into the local community.

### **The behaviour and safety of pupils are good**

- Pupils arrive in lessons keen to learn and ready to work. They behave well in nearly all lessons, and often behaviour is excellent. Occasionally they become a little fidgety, especially if the activities are not at the right level or teachers speak to the whole class for too long.
- The behaviour and self-confidence of pupils who have had poor experiences in their previous schools rapidly improve after they join Highshore. They say that they feel that the school helps them enormously in getting back on track with their learning.
- Students in the sixth form behave very maturely and enjoy their learning both at the school and off site, for example at college.
- Most lesson activities arouse the pupils and create an enthusiasm for learning more. This was seen in a drama lesson where all the pupils gave their best when asked to lift a chair above their heads in a sequence of actions and return it to the floor in unison. One could hear a pin drop as they watched and listened to each other very carefully.
- Out of lessons, at break times for example, pupils behave extremely well. They are well mannered and ready to lend a hand to each other and to staff. Older pupils freely assist younger pupils, for example in explaining and answering questions during a school council meeting.
- Pupils say they enjoy coming to school and that they feel safe at all times. If they have a personal problem, they say that they would talk to any of the adults on the staff.
- Parents and carers agree that their children behave well and are kept safe. One parent, speaking for many, said, 'Teachers are very skilled at managing difficult behaviour in a safe way. On a visit, I saw two teachers dealing beautifully with a pupil who had lost control and was very upset, so that he calmed down very quickly.'
- From records and conversations with pupils and parents, there are no fights or racist incidents. Bullying is virtually non-existent, and pupils showed a good understanding of different types of bullying when they discussed whether it was bullying if a pupil with behavioural difficulties lashes out randomly and unexpectedly.
- Although attendance is improving, it remains slightly below average despite the school's best efforts. This is because a few parents persist in taking their children out of school for long visits overseas. Although the school works very hard with the local authority and with the families, these few pupils do not improve attendance sufficiently.

### **The leadership and management are good**

- The school's leadership team and the governors are determined for the school to be successful. They are absolutely committed to the improvement of the pupils' skills, knowledge and life chances, particularly through their very strong partnership with parents and carers.
- In the past two or three years, the school has faced significant changes in the profile of the pupils that are coming in. This has meant that the leaders and governors have had to provide staff with new skills and equip the school with different resources more suitable to the new intake.
- Throughout this period, the school has successfully maintained a good quality of education. It has covered all the issues identified at the last inspection, including the provision of after-school

clubs and improved arrangements for collecting, analysing and using information about pupils' academic progress.

- The leaders and governors place great importance on improving the quality of teaching, and have introduced robust programmes of lesson observations, provided very relevant staff training and set rigorous targets for staff to improve their work.
- The senior leaders set high standards, expecting the best from staff and pupils. They have not shied away from difficult conversations with staff where improvements in teaching quality have been too slow.
- The school uses performance pay effectively in order to carry out all of its identified priorities that it has planned for the school to continue its improvement.
- The school works well with the local authority, whose support is effective and proportionate, especially through the provision of an experienced link adviser.
- The leaders and governors have put good procedures in place so that it always has an accurate view of its own performance. This, together with the improvements they have made, means there is capacity for even faster improvement in the future.
- The school has worked hard to make sure there is a consistent approach to teaching in English. However, the development of writing in other subjects is inconsistent.
- Staffing difficulties have meant that the leadership and management of mathematics, as well as the quality of teaching, have not been as strong as they could be, although the school is taking action that it hopes will resolve these difficulties before the summer term.
- The school has well-developed links with a wide range of partners, such as the local college and with a range of workplace providers. These links provide good opportunities for pupils who require more adult or vocational experiences.
- The curriculum is well planned and meets the needs and interests of the learners. There are good opportunities for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development throughout the day and in the after-school clubs, and pupils become increasingly mature and independent as they move up through the school. The articulate members of the school council are a testimony to this.
- The curriculum is particularly strong in providing pupils with an opportunity for creative endeavours, such as playing the drums and acting in drama productions. A particular highlight was when pupils from the school led the Olympic Celebration parade up the Mall in London last summer.
- Students in the sixth form enjoy a curriculum that prepares them well for college or work-related training. The curriculum enables the students to become more independent, by including travel training for example. Students spend one or two days a week in college and all have access to work experience at a placement tailored to their needs and interests.
- The school has thorough procedures in place in order to check up on the quality of teaching and learning at off-site placements.
- The school leaders are committed to tackling any rare occurrences of discrimination and to making sure that all pupils have equal chances to succeed, although a few pupils who do not attend school regularly do not achieve as well as others.
- **The governance of the school:**
  - Governance at the school is very strong. All governors have received training, including training on performance management and judging the quality of teaching; consequently, they have a good awareness of these aspects. The quality of teachers' work is scrupulously checked and the process is closely linked to decisions about pay rises. The governors know the school very well, and have a deep understanding of its strengths and priorities for improvement. They have set up effective arrangements that allow them to actively support and challenge the school leaders with their own analysis of how the school is developing. They have a good understanding of performance data. The governors conscientiously and thoroughly monitor the school's improvement plan. They give full regard to the well-being and safety of pupils and play their full part in carrying out their statutory duties, such as safeguarding. The governors take pains to find out what resources the school requires in order to successfully meet its priorities. They make sure that the pupil premium money is used directly to enable individual disadvantaged learners to make the best progress they can.

## What inspection judgements mean

School		
Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	An outstanding school is highly effective in delivering outcomes that provide exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs. This ensures that pupils are very well equipped for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 2	Good	A good school is effective in delivering outcomes that provide well for all its pupils' needs. Pupils are well prepared for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 3	Requires improvement	A school that requires improvement is not yet a good school, but it is not inadequate. This school will receive a full inspection within 24 months from the date of this inspection.
Grade 4	Inadequate	<p>A school that has serious weaknesses is inadequate overall and requires significant improvement but leadership and management are judged to be Grade 3 or better. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p> <p>A school that requires special measures is one where the school is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the school's leaders, managers or governors have not demonstrated that they have the capacity to secure the necessary improvement in the school. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p>

## School details

<b>Unique reference number</b>	100872
<b>Local authority</b>	Southwark
<b>Inspection number</b>	400432

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

<b>Type of school</b>	Special
<b>School category</b>	Community special
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	11–17
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Gender of pupils in the sixth form</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	100
<b>Of which, number on roll in sixth form</b>	13
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Sally Smith
<b>Headteacher</b>	Eileen Ollieuz
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	24–25 November 2009
<b>Telephone number</b>	020 7639 7211
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