



Hamilton Lodge School for Deaf Children

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 114619
LEA Brighton and Hove
Inspection number 279427
Inspection dates 29 June 2006 to 29 June 2006
Reporting inspector Mark Evans AI

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

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|------------------------------------|------------------------|---------------------------|---------------------|
| Type of school | Special | School address | Walpole Road |
| School category | Non-maintained special | | Brighton |
| Age range of pupils | 5 to 18 | | East Sussex BN2 0LS |
| Gender of pupils | Mixed | Telephone number | 01273 682362 |
| Number on roll | 67 | Fax number | 01273 695742 |
| Appropriate authority | The governing body | Chair of governors | Mr David Fletcher |
| Date of previous inspection | 4 December 2000 | Headteacher | Mr Chris Owen |

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

The school provides for deaf children who need signed communication to access learning; pupils' first language is predominantly British Sign Language (BSL). About 20% of pupils have more additional complex needs including social, emotional and behavioural needs. The majority of pupils are residential; they come from a variety of social and ethnic backgrounds, with different experiences of approaches to communication. Since the last inspection, the school has changed from having independent status to being non-maintained. There are currently no Year 13 pupils at the school. The principal was not present during the inspection.

Key for inspection grades

| | |
|---------|--------------|
| Grade 1 | Outstanding |
| Grade 2 | Good |
| Grade 3 | Satisfactory |
| Grade 4 | Inadequate |

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

Hamilton Lodge School for Deaf Children is a good school; this matches the school's view of its effectiveness. It provides a safe, caring and friendly atmosphere in which pupils thrive. They are happy and almost all really enjoy being there. Most pupils make good progress in meeting their individual targets; in BSL, communication skills and deaf studies, very good progress is made. The progress of pupils with additional complex needs, although satisfactory, is reduced because of relative weaknesses in the curriculum, as the school has identified. All pupils make good progress in their self-confidence and their personal development. Teaching is good; the staff know their pupils well and enjoy helping them learn. Care, guidance and support are good.

The curriculum provided is satisfactory. It covers a suitable range of subjects and for the majority of pupils is highly appropriate for their needs. However, for those pupils with more complex needs, the curriculum is not as well matched to the pupils' needs that are additional to their hearing impairment, nor does it provide a sufficient or appropriate range of accreditation at the end of Year 11.

Leadership and management are good. The senior management team lead the school well; they have an accurate understanding of the school's strengths and the areas that need to be developed. The school development plan outlines future developments clearly and these are entirely in line with the overall aims of the school. The school is well supported by the governing body; however, their monitoring of the quality of education provided, although satisfactory, is too reliant on the principal's written report. This limits the amount of critical support they can offer. The school has improved well since the last inspection and the capacity to improve further is good. It provides good value for money.

Effectiveness and efficiency of the sixth form

Grade: 2

In the extra year they have at school after becoming 16, the students are well provided for and make good progress academically and socially. They live in a separate house and have control of day-to-day matters such as laundry and some meals. They develop further their independence skills and attend college one day a week. All go on to further education or into the world of work. The transition between school and college or work is effective.

Effectiveness and efficiency of boarding provision

Grade: 9

The boarding provision makes a good contribution to the learning and personal development of the 49 pupils who board at the school. There is good compliance with the relevant National Minimum Standards for residential schools and the school has resolved the minor issues of the latest very positive report by the Commission for Social Care Inspection successfully. There is very good communication between care

and teaching staff who share important information with one another effectively. Parents and pupils are very appreciative of this level of care and support.

What the school should do to improve further

- Develop the curriculum to ensure that it has a better impact on the achievement and progress of pupils with additional complex needs.
- Improve the monitoring of school effectiveness by the governing body so that they are better able to offer support and challenge to the senior management team.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Pupils who have hearing impairment as their only significant special educational need achieve well. When they start school, their standards overall are below national averages and many have very limited communication skills. They make very good progress in developing their skills in BSL, communication studies and deaf studies. The targets they are set to support their learning are appropriately challenging and pupils usually achieve well against them. At age 16, many achieve good results in GCSE and entry level examinations in a range of subjects. Pupils with additional special needs make satisfactory progress because, as the school is aware, the curriculum is not as well matched to their needs.

Pupils and students make good progress in relation to their capabilities, particularly in personal and social skills; this encourages them in other subjects. There is marked development of their self-confidence and self-esteem which enables them to approach learning in all subjects with high expectations of success.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils' personal development is good, as is their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. They think deeply about important issues and have a good awareness of right and wrong. Behaviour is good overall; a few pupils find it hard to stick to the rules and, as a result, last year there were five fixed term exclusions. Relationships are very good throughout the school and do much to develop pupils' confidence and well-being. Attendance is good. Pupils enjoy coming to school because they feel safe. They are keen to take responsibility and feel confident that their views are valued. For example, they used the school council very effectively recently to ensure that chilled water was provided for pupils and to encourage the school to provide them with healthier food. Pupils are very keen to accept responsibilities such as taking assemblies or helping younger ones who would benefit from additional support. Sixth form residential students take good care of themselves. Pupils make a good contribution to the life of the community and younger ones have great fun taking deaf awareness assemblies in local primary schools. Pupils feel well prepared for future life as they

develop confidence when communicating with others and preparing for college and the world of work.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Teaching and learning are good. The teachers know their pupils well and the pupils benefit from the very high quality of signing that is apparent. This helps them to access the curriculum easily and to improve their own communication skills rapidly. Staff work well as a team.

There are positive relationships throughout the school. These support learning well, ensuring that the pupils feel valued and secure. There is much laughter around the school which underlines the skill of the teachers in encouraging learning in a positive manner. Assessment of what pupils learn is thorough and is recorded in a way that helps teachers, parents and pupils understand how much progress is being made. Teachers' detailed planning, in most instances, uses the information gained to support pupils' learning well. It is sometimes less effective for pupils with additional learning needs. The setting of targets on an individual basis is well established.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

The curriculum is satisfactory. It is planned carefully to give pupils a good balance of National Curriculum work and tasks to develop their communication skills. The school rightly places emphasis on pupils' understanding of deaf culture; time is allocated to deaf studies rather than to modern foreign languages or to music. The good focus on basic literacy, numeracy and information and communication technology skills prepares pupils well for life after school. Older pupils and sixth form students are provided with valuable opportunities to prepare for college courses and the world of work through a well structured programme of visits and tasks.

The curriculum is less effective for pupils with more complex learning needs being less well matched to their needs. The school recognises this. It is not yet sufficiently well focussed to consistently meet these pupils' needs, with the result that preparation for some accredited courses is insufficient. All pupils take part enthusiastically in a wide variety of activities at lunchtime and after school that do much to enrich the curriculum. The curriculum benefits from a good variety of visits and visitors that adds extra meaning to lessons. The good personal, social and health curriculum helps pupils to appreciate the need for healthy eating and safe behaviour. Provision for careers education is good.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

The care, guidance and support are good. Teachers are thorough in their recording of pupils' personal development and use this detailed knowledge in their teaching and support of individual pupils. Academic guidance offered is good; monitoring of achievement, for example, has led to planned changes to the curriculum for pupils with additional needs. Key workers who have responsibility for specific pupils do their job well; pupils and parents speak highly of their support. They help to make the school a secure and happy place in which pupils enjoy learning. The school does much to encourage healthy eating, as has been recognised by a recent Healthy Schools award. Teachers are careful to emphasise safe practices in lessons such as science and design and technology. Links with other professionals such as the Deaf Child and Family team and health staff are good; they provide useful support for pupils and staff. Child protection procedures are effective.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

Leadership and management are good. Leadership from the governing body and senior management team succeeds in setting a clear vision for the school's future development. As a result, there is strong school development planning in line with the strategic plan for the charity. Day-to-day management of education and care is effective; the good quality of provision is supported and enhanced by the managers. The quality and effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation process are good; the school has an accurate understanding of its strengths and the areas that need to be developed. Parents and pupils are appropriately involved in the running of and planning for the school, through regular consultations. Senior managers monitor the quality of teaching and care effectively; where necessary, improvements in the quality of provision are identified and supported by the senior management team. For example, the excellent communication skills of the staff are, for many, the result of training and support from within the school. The governing body is well led and constituted in such a way as to make available suitable expertise from a balance of hearing and deaf people appropriate to the school. Governors provide sensible support and guidance for the school, but their monitoring of the effectiveness of the school is based on too limited a range of evidence.

The school has made good progress since the last inspection, addressing all issues. In particular, the literacy development of children has improved following the school undertaking research with Reading University. Application of the findings from this project has resulted in changes in the role and responsibilities of the speech and language therapist. Examples, such as this, show the school's capacity to improve further is good.

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Inspection judgements

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| <i>Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate</i> | School Overall | 16-19 |
|--|-----------------------|--------------|

Overall effectiveness

| | | |
|--|-----|-----|
| How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners? | 2 | 2 |
| How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being? | 2 | 2 |
| The quality and standards in foundation stage | NA | NA |
| The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation | 2 | 2 |
| The capacity to make any necessary improvements | Yes | Yes |
| Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection | Yes | Yes |

Achievement and standards

| | | |
|--|---|---|
| How well do learners achieve? | 2 | 2 |
| The standards ¹ reached by learners | 4 | 4 |
| How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners | 2 | 2 |
| How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress | 2 | |

Personal development and well-being

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners? | 2 | 2 |
| The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development | 2 | |
| The behaviour of learners | 2 | |
| The attendance of learners | 2 | |
| How well learners enjoy their education | 2 | |
| The extent to which learners adopt safe practices | 2 | |
| The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles | 2 | |
| The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community | 2 | |
| How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being | 2 | |

The quality of provision

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs? | 2 | 2 |
| How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners? | 3 | 3 |
| How well are learners cared for, guided and supported? | 2 | 2 |

¹ Grade 1 - Exceptionally and consistently high; Grade 2 - Generally above average with none significantly below average; Grade 3 - Broadly average; Grade 4 - Exceptionally low.

Leadership and management

| | | |
|--|-----|-----------------------|
| How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners? | 2 | 2 |
| How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education | 2 | |
| How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets, through quality assurance and self-review | 2 | |
| How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can | 3 | |
| How effectively and efficiently resources are deployed to achieve value for money | 2 | |
| The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities | 3 | |
| The adequacy and suitability of staff to ensure that learners are protected | Yes | insufficient evidence |

| | |
|---|-----|
| The extent to which schools enable learners to be healthy | |
| Learners are encouraged and enabled to eat and drink healthily | Yes |
| Learners are encouraged and enabled to take regular exercise | Yes |
| Learners are discouraged from smoking and substance abuse | Yes |
| Learners are educated about sexual health | Yes |
| The extent to which providers ensure that learners stay safe | |
| Procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements | Yes |
| Risk assessment procedures and related staff training are in place | Yes |
| Action is taken to reduce anti-social behaviour, such as bullying and racism | Yes |
| Learners are taught about key risks and how to deal with them | Yes |
| The extent to which learners make a positive contribution | |
| Learners are helped to develop stable, positive relationships | Yes |
| Learners, individually and collectively, participate in making decisions that affect them | Yes |
| Learners are encouraged to initiate, participate in and manage activities in school and the wider community | Yes |
| The extent to which schools enable learners to achieve economic well-being | |
| There is provision to promote learners' basic skills | Yes |
| Learners have opportunities to develop enterprise skills and work in teams | Yes |
| Careers education and guidance is provided to all learners in key stage 3 and 4 and the sixth form | Yes |
| Education for all learners aged 14–19 provides an understanding of employment and the economy | Yes |

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

Hello everyone – you may have noticed Terry and I at your school a few days ago. Some of you were kind enough to talk to me and others saw us in lessons or around the school. Thank you for making us welcome, for showing me your work and for telling us about your school.

After our day with you, we are clear that Hamilton Lodge is a good school.

I have written a report that says what the school does well, and also what it could do even better. Some of the items in the report match the things you told us about, like the good teaching, the fact that you enjoy school, and the way that everyone helps you improve your communication skills. I have also highlighted the progress you all make in your personal and social skills. I have also talked to staff at the school about some ways of making the school even better. The first one is to look at the curriculum, to make sure that lessons are matched well to what all of you need to learn. I have also suggested that it would be good if the governors who are in charge of making sure that the school is well run could find more ways of checking how the school is doing.

I hope that explains a little bit about what we were doing at Hamilton Lodge. We really enjoyed our day there - thank you again for making us feel so welcome.