

Chailey Heritage School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	114682
Local Authority	East Sussex
Inspection number	311664
Inspection dates	15–16 May 2007
Reporting inspector	Steffi Penny HMI

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

Type of school	Special
School category	Non-maintained
Age range of pupils	2–19
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	67
6th form	24
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Vacant Position
Headteacher	Sylvia Lamb
Date of previous school inspection	10 June 2002
School address	Haywards Heath Road North Chailey Lewes BN8 4EF
Telephone number	01825 724444
Fax number	01825 723773

Age group	2–19
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors.

Description of the school

Chailey Heritage School is a day and residential school for children and young people with complex physical disabilities and associated learning problems. Nearly all the learners are wheelchair users, some are visually impaired and many have severe sensory and learning difficulties. All learners have a statement of special educational needs. Many take advantage of the residential provision in bungalows on the site. Dual placements occur where some learners spend a proportion of their week in a mainstream setting.

The school is a registered charity run by a governing body and a board of trustees. Funding is from local education authorities and social service departments. The school works closely with South Downs Health Authority, with whom it shares a site.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 1

Chailey Heritage is an outstanding school. The headteacher has been a driving force for change. She is most ably supported by all leaders and managers such that leadership and management at all levels are now outstanding. All staff have worked incredibly hard in adapting their work over the last few years to improve the educational achievements of learners. Learners and their parents are rightly proud of the exceptional care, guidance and support that the school provides. This results in outstanding levels of pupil personal development and well-being. An exemplary feature of this school is the way it works with the excellent partnerships it has formed and which it continues to develop. One parent summed up the views of many when they wrote, 'Education (at Chailey Heritage) is far more broad than simply what is learned in the classroom – it extends throughout his waking hours and recognises the role of life skills as well as academic learning'.

At this school the needs of the learner always come first. This has meant adults and procedures needing to become flexible and responsive. An example of this is the new personal, social and health education (PSHE) programme along with the altered timetable that has ensured that learners in the secondary phase have greater choice. Curriculum provision throughout the school is good because it meets individual needs well. The dual placements allow those learners who benefit from working within a larger peer group and mainstream setting to do so.

The specialist multidisciplinary setting along with the involvement of the whole- school community and its partnerships are exceptional. This bringing together of education, health and social welfare ensures that the learners are fully supported and prepared for subsequent life in the community. Consequently, learners' attendance, behaviour and contribution to the community are outstanding. The vast majority of learners enjoy school. Although some learners get homesick from time to time, staff in the bungalows and in the school work together to provide a warm and comforting atmosphere. Through the new school council and regular questionnaires the school ensures that learners are listened to and, where possible, their views acted upon. Learners said that they felt safe and well cared for. Older secondary learners want more choice about what they do in school and to be treated by all staff according to their age. The school is aware of the needs of these young people and is investigating ways in which they can help address them.

Standards throughout the school are much lower compared with those seen nationally; nevertheless, the achievement of learners is at least good and increasingly outstanding. All work in the Foundation Stage is exceptional. Here all staff have a shared vision to ensure that the learners are consistently challenged and supported so that they reach their potential in all the areas of learning and development expected for their age group. Teaching and learning in the rest of the school are at least good and increasingly outstanding. One of the reasons why the rest of the school is not currently quite performing to the same high standard as the Foundation Stage is because the curriculum is not as flexible and consequently teachers are not in a position to tailor lessons to meet individual needs so well. For example, the current timetable hinders the amount of externally accredited courses that could be available to some learners at earlier ages. There have also been more staffing changes in the other departments, which has meant that these areas have been slower to take on board the changes that needed to be made.

The school council and parents have raised issues concerning the healthiness of food and, in particular, lunchtime arrangements. Inspection evidence agrees with their concerns and shows that the lack of a central dining area has a negative impact on the taught time available as well as making care and health needs for learners tight. The school is well aware of these issues and is looking at ways to resolve them.

Governors act as good critical friends to the school. However, in a recent questionnaire, the vast majority of learners throughout the school did not know a governor or what their role is.

Effectiveness and efficiency of the sixth form

Grade: 1

Effectiveness and efficiency of the sixth form are outstanding. This is due to the very high quality input and coordination between therapists, teachers, key workers, support assistants, residential staff and external partnerships. The school increasingly gives post-16 learners greater opportunity to make their own choices and decisions. All are involved in the transition meeting to decide where they will go and what they will do after leaving school. Learners and their parents are carefully guided and supported throughout the processes of joining and leaving the sixth form. All learners have an individualised learning plan alongside accredited courses that includes experience of work-related learning through engaging in mini-enterprises.

What the school should do to improve further

- Address the timetabling issues so that the time for education is maximised for all learners but balanced with the care and health needs of individuals.
- Increase the flexibility of the curriculum to fully meet the needs of individual learners at all ages and give them more choices.
- Increase learners' knowledge of governors and appreciation of governance.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Grade for sixth form: 2

Achievement is good throughout the school and in the sixth form. Achievement in the Foundation Stage is outstanding. Standards at all levels in the school are well below the national average. The training of teachers and teaching assistants in the use of information and communication technology (ICT), particularly specialist programmes and equipment, is having a positive impact on the work that learners do and has increased the range of learning opportunities that is available to them. This is because the communities' expertise and use of ICT are monitored very effectively and deficiencies followed up.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

Grade for sixth form: 1

The personal development and well-being of pupils, including their spiritual, moral and social education, is outstanding and reflects the extremely effective strategies the school employs to develop learners' self-esteem and independence. Learners take an active role in their own community, support charities and raise money for others in need. The school is not insular and has many visitors. Learners do not go out into the wider community as much as the school

would like because of the limitations of the medical and transportation issues involved. The school is not content about this and is looking at ways where this aspect of its work could be improved.

Where possible the school has developed dual placements. These allow learners to have able-bodied friends near their home. These learners benefit enormously from the mainstream experience, whilst also receiving a structured programme of education and therapies delivered by a multidisciplinary team.

The newly elected school council allows the learners to share concerns and ideas. It is also used by the school to drive improvement through purposeful activities. One successful example is the raising of funds to create a multi-sensory garden.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Grade for sixth form: 2

Achievement is good as a result of good teaching and the use of good school-home/bungalow links that reinforce learning. The school has adopted a more consistent approach in the classrooms, which is being monitored very well by senior leaders. Teachers are also more accountable for recording the progress of learners in their classes on a daily basis. The restructuring of the teaching assistants' workload is also having a positive impact on the way learning takes place.

There is now a far greater emphasis throughout all aspects of the school's work on teaching and learning. This was very much needed but tensions remain. A particular issue is the time allocation for lunch. Lunchtimes, if too long, restrict the amount of teaching time, in particular for the more able, but if they are too short cause anxiety to parents, care and medical staff because of the complex nature of individual learners' health care and physical needs. The school is aware of this and is considering ways that this problem could best be resolved.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

Grade for sixth form: 2

The full range of the national curriculum is followed, along with additional lessons, for example, in horse riding. Work is well matched to the learners' ages and needs so they are suitably challenged. One student really likes the opportunity to have German lessons and wished the inspector 'Guten Morgen!'

The school has recognised that some learners were asked to do work that was less exciting and challenging than it could be. Consequently in September it created tutorial groups for those in the sixth form so that learners could have a greater choice of courses to follow that were also directly focused on their individual needs. Not only do these courses prepare learners well for their future lives but learners said they welcomed being treated more akin to their age. Changes to other parts of the curriculum, for example, in the secondary department, have also increased the choices for learners and made work more personalised. Some learners said they would like choices earlier. Inspection evidence agrees that for some learners this would provide them with greater challenge and opportunity, particularly with regard to work-related learning.

ICT is recognised as a central part of the curriculum where it also often gives pleasure and provides a means for communication and technological control. In-house courses and certificates for learners and staff ensure that learners get the most out of the available equipment and programmes.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 1

Grade for sixth form: 1

Care, guidance and support are exceptional and all relevant procedures are in place to support and safeguard learners. This is because the parents, care staff, teachers, assistants, therapists and health staff all work in unison with a shared, dedicated sense of purpose with the individual learner as their focus. The result is that learners are individually supported to develop skills and knowledge to prepare them for later life. They are also supported to be in a position to be able to learn in class. Therapy and health needs are seamlessly interwoven during the taught day. The consequence of the on-site expertise and other partnerships is that learners do not have to spend long travel times to get to and from appointments. A excellent example of this work is the new venture for those learners with profound and multiple learning disabilities, a therapeutic full-body massage once a week. This has resulted in the ease of learners' pain and discomfort, with the knock-on effect that some have been better able to sleep, all are more relaxed and thus more ready for school work.

Where possible, learners are encouraged and supported back into mainstream education. Currently several learners have dual placements with mainstream schools and a full-time placement is planned for September. These placements work so well because staff in both schools work hard at sharing information and expertise.

Leadership and management

Grade: 1

Grade for sixth form: 1

The senior leadership team complement each other well and work in unison. Since her appointment the headteacher has needed to make many changes to the structures, procedures and records that the school has. This she has done extremely successfully with the full support of the governors, staff and parents. Self-evaluation, critical external review and training have all effectively ensured improvement. Much has been done in a short space of time to ensure rapid improvements in the quality of education provided by the school. This has not been achieved to the detriment of other aspects of the community and school's work. Consequently the capacity for the school to improve further is outstanding.

The school knows how well individual learners are doing by assessing them through a portfolio record. Developments in assessment and tracking procedures will mean that the school will have a more concise record of how groups of learners are progressing in the near future.

The dual placements are successful because of the strong commitment of all the professionals involved in the large multidisciplinary team. The outstanding leadership in this area is demonstrated by the excellent coordination and responsiveness to needs as they arise.

Governance is good. This is because governors play an active part in supporting and challenging the school. Learners would like to know who they are and what they do.

Any complaints about the inspection or the report should be made following the procedures set out in the guidance 'Complaints about school inspection', which is available from Ofsted's website: www.ofsted.gov.uk.

Annex A

Inspection judgements

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

How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners?	1	1
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	1	1
The quality and standards in the Foundation Stage	1	NA
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	1	1
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	1	1
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	2

Personal development and well-being

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	1	1
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1	1
The behaviour of learners	1	1
The attendance of learners	1	1
How well learners enjoy their education	1	1
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	1	1
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	2	2
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	1	1
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	2	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?	2	2
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	1	1

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

Annex A

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	1	1
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	1	
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets	2	
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	1	
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	1	
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	2	
Do procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements?	Yes	Yes
Does this school require special measures?	No	
Does this school require a notice to improve?	No	

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

17 May 2007

Dear Learners,

Chailey Heritage School, North Chailey, Lewes, East Sussex BN8 4PU

Not long ago I came to your school to see how you were getting on and whether I could suggest anything to make your school even better. You made me very welcome and I enjoyed meeting some of you.

I was with you for two days. That was long enough for me to realise that Chailey Heritage is an outstanding school. One of the reasons is that everyone works so hard together to get things right. I particularly enjoyed visiting you in the classrooms and at break time. There were lots of other things that I liked. Here are a few:

- you obviously enjoy school, work hard and make good friends
- the many different people who work at the school do their best to look after you
- you are helped to be as independent as possible and to take responsibility for your own actions.

There are a few things which I think would make your school better:

- staff should look again at the timetable to make sure that lunchtime is not too short or too long
- some of you should have more choices about what courses you do in school
- you should know who the governors are and what they do.

Thank you for being so polite and helpful during the visit. I hope that you continue to enjoy your learning and do your best. Please thank your parents for the helpful comments they made on the questionnaires.

With my very best wishes for your future,

Steffi Penny Her Majesty's Inspector