

Spa School

Inspection report

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|--------------------------------|---------------|
| Unique Reference Number | 100873 |
| Local Authority | Southwark |
| Inspection number | 335609 |
| Inspection dates | 7–8 July 2010 |
| Reporting inspector | Jo Curd |

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

| | |
|--|----------------------------------|
| Type of school | Special |
| School category | Community |
| 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 | 86 |
| Of which, number on roll in the sixth form | 20 |
| Appropriate authority | The governing body |
| Chair | Verity Mihai |
| Headteacher | Simon Eccles |
| Date of previous school inspection | 21 March 2007 |
| School address | Monnow Road London SE1 5RN |
| Telephone number | 020 72373714 |
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by two additional inspectors. Fifteen lessons were observed including 12 teachers and 20 support staff. Discussions were held with groups of students, governors and staff. They observed the school's work, and looked at the school development plan, lesson monitoring, behaviour plans, assessment documents, school improvement partner reviews and 22 parent/carer questionnaires.

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

- whether, given the fact that there have been three exclusions over the past year, the school's judgement of behaviour as outstanding can be supported
- the effectiveness of highly detailed student-specific monitoring exercises, known as 'deep dives' by the school, to evaluate outcomes and the quality of provision
- the effectiveness of the school's distributed leadership
- the effectiveness of systems to safeguard students' health and safety.

Information about the school

The school currently operates on two sites one and a half miles apart. The second, which caters for three older students with highly challenging behaviour, is due to close when these students leave in July. Students attend from nine different local authorities. The proportion of students attending from within Southwark is growing. All students at this specialist school have statements for autism or Asperger's Syndrome and additional learning difficulties. The proportion of students with severe learning difficulties is currently 45% and growing. Over 60% students are from minority ethnic backgrounds and nearly half of Black African and/or Caribbean descent. Very few students have English as an additional language. About 15% of students are girls. The proportion eligible for free school meals is much higher than in most other schools. A very small number of children are looked after by the local authority. Stability is high as almost all students start at the beginning of Year 7 and leave at the end of Year 11 or sixth form and most staff have been at the school for many years. The school has several national awards including Healthy School status and accreditation by the National Autistic Society.

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

1

Main findings

All students make good progress in their learning and personal development because teaching and the curriculum are good and care is outstanding. Excellent leadership and management contribute exceedingly well to the effective way students' needs are met and the school's calm, supportive environment. The majority of parents and carers are appreciative of all that the school offers and speak highly of how much their children have developed since being here. One expressed the views of most when they said, 'This is a good school where members of staff ensure help to see that students can achieve and be happy. My child is very happy and this has made it easy for the family at home too.'

The school has changed considerably since the last inspection. There are more students at the main site, including some who were previously at the annexe, a separate site for students with particularly challenging behaviour, and a far greater proportion have more complex and profound learning difficulties. Initially, staff found this new pattern of organisation hard as it required them to quickly develop new teaching skills and behaviour strategies. There was a high incidence of staff absence and many found work stressful and difficult. Largely due to highly effective leadership and management, staff ethos has improved and teachers are now extremely positive about the school. They share a clear vision and are highly ambitious about their work with all the students. This strong drive and ambition was evident in work to enable students with complex needs, some of whom had rarely spoken before, to take part in an assembly during the inspection. With support, these students presented experiences about, and achievements in, school and college to the whole school. Achievement is good. All students complete at least one accredited course, including full and entry level GCSEs, by the time they leave. Given the recent significant changes to the school, the subsequent improvements seen in the quality of teaching are outstanding. Staff are positive, morale is high and there is little staff absence or turnover. Student attendance is also high. The focus on learning and progress is stronger and almost all activities are relevant, suitable and well prepared. Activities are modified to meet students' differing needs but do not always match these sufficiently well to raise progress above good. The practical, interesting and relevant curriculum is effective and developing. Links between subjects and use of information and communication technology to help students progress are more successful in some classes than others, especially in the sixth form. Leaders at all levels are fully involved in very successful monitoring and evaluation, including illuminating 'deep-dives' which successfully show the experiences and outcomes for individual students at the school. They use their findings well to ensure that provision and outcomes continually develop and improve.

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Support and well-being of all students are very high priorities throughout the school. Given their special educational needs and/or disabilities the majority of students behave particularly well. Those who find this more difficult are supported extremely well. Should occasional incidents of challenging behaviour occur, students are quickly calmed and usually speedily reintegrated into class. Behaviour in the annexe is also good because students there are supported so well. Disruptions to learning are minimal. However, careful behaviour management remains paramount as many of the students have high levels of anxiety and difficulties with communication. Students make outstanding progress in their behaviour and outcomes for this are good. Students' comments, mannerisms and facial expressions indicate that they feel extremely safe.

Given the significant improvements in the quality of teaching, highly effective monitoring and evaluation and the enthusiasm and motivation of staff, the capacity to sustain further improvement is excellent.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Ensure that activities are consistently well matched to all the students' differing needs so that they all make as much progress as possible and none have to wait too long to be engaged.
- Improve the curriculum, especially in the sixth form, by:
 - ensuring that subjects are linked effectively to promote the learning and social development of all.

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

Students' behaviour, personal development and academic outcomes have all improved because the school places students' needs at the centre of its provision. Given the significant barriers to learning their special educational needs and/or disabilities bring, all the students make good progress. There are no significant differences in the progress of any groups, including those of differing need and disability, boys, girls or those of various ethnic backgrounds. All students leave with recognised accreditations and those who can, attain entry level qualifications in English and mathematics and GCSEs in art and design. Nearly all the students go on to further education and a few are in higher education.

All students in a physical education lesson seen in the inspection made good progress in learning football skills due to clear explanations, effective modelling, good support from the teacher and external sports coaches, even though on occasion some students had to wait slightly too long for their turn. Students also made good progress in an imaginative and well-planned art and design lesson where they each created designer collage shoes even though the task was slightly easy for a few.

Most students behave extremely well. Those who find this more difficult largely due to anxiety and limited communication skills, are supported and refocused extremely quickly. There is a very calm, settled atmosphere throughout the school. Over the past

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two years, three students with extremely challenging behaviour have been excluded while alternative care and support have been arranged. Attendance is good. Students develop a good understanding of issues relating to their health and know that a balanced diet and exercise are good for them, even if some occasionally choose not to follow this. They contribute very well to the school and wider community helping with jobs, reading with younger students, serving on the school council and leading parts of lessons in and out of school through the Junior Sports Leadership programme. Students make good progress in their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development through visits out, assemblies and culturally and religiously diverse visitors, even though some lessons are not always sufficiently active or engaging.

Although attainment remains well below the national average, students are well prepared for later life and learning because their independence and self-esteem are fostered well through excellent care and extremely good links with other agencies.

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

| | |
|---|----------|
| 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 | 1 |
| Pupils' behaviour | 2 |
| The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles | 2 |
| The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community | 1 |
| 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 | 2 |
| The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development | 2 |

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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How effective is the provision?

All students are extremely safe due to highly effective care, guidance and support. Systems to safeguard their health and safety are outstanding. Leaders and managers frequently review policies and procedures, which are already thorough and robust, to see if they can be made even more effective. Perimeter gates and fences have been improved to ensure that all students are safe and secure. Staff successfully engage most parents and carers and work well with them to promote student's learning and welfare. The quality of teaching is good because staff know students well and have an increasingly strong focus on learning as well as personal development. Staff work well together to meet the learning and social needs of students. Although teachers use assessments well to vary activities for different students, these do not always match individuals sufficiently well. Occasionally some activities are slightly too easy or difficult for some students. Sometimes students have to wait too long to take turns in activities, which slows progress in learning.

The curriculum is continually improving to meet students' needs and keep up with changes in national accreditations. Leaders use excellent partnerships with other schools, colleges and specialists such as sports coaches to extend opportunities and provision for all. Enrichment through a range of lunchtime clubs and residential trips, including those for students with highly complex needs, contributes well to learning and personal development. The effectiveness of links between subjects and the use of information and communication technology varies between classes but is generally good.

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?

Excellent leadership and management have ensured that, despite challenging changes in the school, improvement since the last inspection is good. Systems to safeguard the health and safety of all students are outstanding. They are continuously updated and extremely robust. Leaders and managers are astute, ambitious and proactive. One example of their initiative and drive is their request for joint lesson observations with local authority officers and school improvement partners in order to improve their already good monitoring and evaluation skills. Another is their use of 'deep dive' evaluations where provision and outcomes of a single student are investigated in great

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depth for a whole day. Illuminating findings, showing what it is really like for individual students at the school, including interviews and videos, are shared with governors and staff. These have contributed to leaders' excellent understanding of the school and have been used extremely well to improve provision for all. For example, they have been used to pinpoint the need for teachers to ensure they also support the needs of quiet well-behaved students, ensure explanations are clear to students with more complex needs and react positively to students with particularly challenging attitudes and behaviour. Extremely strong commitment to each student and rigorous evaluation ensure that provision and outcomes are equally good for all students and that the school ensures strong equal opportunities to succeed. Governors are experienced and astute, supporting and challenging the school well. Excellent partnerships with many agencies including health specialists, sports coaches and colleges contribute well to progress and care. The school's contribution to community cohesion, including visits from teachers locally, nationally and internationally, is good even though rigorous evaluation is at a relatively early stage.

Given the positive outcomes and provision, including exceptional care, guidance and support, this school provides well for its students and offers good value for money.

These are the grades for leadership and management

| | |
|--|----------|
| The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement | 1 |
| Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning | 1 |
| 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 | 2 |
| The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being | 1 |
| The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination | 1 |
| The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures | 1 |
| The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion | 2 |
| The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money | 2 |

Sixth form

The sixth form is increasingly well adapted to meet students' diverse needs. The curriculum is being developed appropriately to include a greater range of accreditations and increase links with local colleges and work experience opportunities. There is now a

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sharper focus on assessing progress and not just on supporting personal development. These changes are, however, more embedded and effective in some classes than others. The relatively new sixth form coordinator has a clear understanding of the need for increased consistency and focus on learning, and the school's clear strategies of how to achieve this are proving increasingly successful.

Students in the sixth form are generally happy and settled. Those who join the school in Year 12 are integrated and supported well. They particularly enjoy the 'post-16 lunchtime club' where they draw, colour, read and watch films. Students with relatively good social skills benefitted greatly from a very relaxed tutor time at the end of the day where they prepared for a visit to a local park, planned what to take and chatted about personal experiences, likes and dislikes. This positive social time where several conversations occurred simultaneously prepared them well for later social events out of school. Work experience, particularly in a local cafe, is also particularly beneficial to the development of students' learning and social skills.

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

Most parents and carers who responded to the questionnaire were positive about all aspects investigated. All of them thought that their children were kept safe and all of them thought that the school was well led and managed. This is in line with inspection findings that both of these aspects are outstanding. Three parents/carers did not agree that teaching was good. Again, this is ratified by the inspection which found some inconsistencies in the quality of teaching across the school. Overall, the views of parents and carers have been supported by, and taken into account, in inspection findings.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Spa 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 22 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 86 pupils registered at the school.

| Statements | Strongly Agree | | Agree | | Disagree | | Strongly disagree | |
|---|----------------|----|-------|----|----------|----|-------------------|---|
| | Total | % | Total | % | Total | % | Total | % |
| My child enjoys school | 14 | 64 | 7 | 32 | 1 | 5 | 0 | 0 |
| The school keeps my child safe | 15 | 68 | 7 | 32 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| The school informs me about my child's progress | 12 | 55 | 9 | 41 | 1 | 5 | 0 | 0 |
| My child is making enough progress at this school | 10 | 45 | 10 | 45 | 1 | 5 | 0 | 0 |
| The teaching is good at this school | 12 | 55 | 7 | 32 | 3 | 14 | 0 | 0 |
| The school helps me to support my child's learning | 11 | 50 | 8 | 36 | 2 | 9 | 0 | 0 |
| The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle | 10 | 45 | 11 | 50 | 1 | 5 | 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 | 50 | 6 | 27 | 1 | 5 | 0 | 0 |
| The school meets my child's particular needs | 13 | 59 | 7 | 32 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour | 9 | 41 | 11 | 50 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns | 14 | 64 | 4 | 18 | 1 | 5 | 1 | 5 |
| The school is led and managed effectively | 14 | 64 | 8 | 36 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school | 15 | 68 | 6 | 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.



12 July 2010

Dear Students

Inspection of Spa School, Southwark, London SE1 5RN

We enjoyed being at Spa School with you recently. We particularly liked talking with some of you at playtime, and eating lunch with others. We were also pleased to meet some of your parents and carers.

□ We think Spa is a good school where you all make good progress in your learning and personal development. Teaching and the curriculum are good and care is outstanding. You learn a lot of interesting things and have good opportunities to go out on visits, for example to local colleges and theatres, and have good opportunities for work experience and to work with others. Teaching is good even though activities are sometimes a bit too easy or too difficult for some of you and you occasionally have to wait slightly too long before you can take part. The curriculum, that is what you learn, is interesting and practical but links between subjects and the use of information and communication technology are not always strong enough to help your progress, especially in the sixth form. Most of you behave extremely well because the school is organised to help you and you are all cared for and supported extremely well. We could tell how very safe you feel through the things you told us, the way you smile and the way you move around the school. You learn a great deal about how to be healthy through eating balanced diets, keeping calm and exercising, even if some of you sometimes choose not to follow this good advice. School leaders are extremely good at their jobs and we think that they are able to improve the school extremely well in the future.

We have asked school leaders to do two things to make the school even better. These are to:

- make sure that activities are suitable for you all and do not involve too much waiting.
- make sure that the curriculum, especially in the sixth form, uses the natural connections between subjects to reinforce your skills and knowledge and to help extend your progress and personal development.

Perhaps you can help by continuing to behave well and trying as hard as you can in all that you do.

Yours sincerely

Jo Curd

Lead inspector

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