

Hérons Dale School

Hawkins Crescent, Shoreham-by-Sea, BN43 6TN

Inspection dates 6–7 February 2013

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Good	2
	This inspection:	Good	2
Achievement of pupils		Good	2
Quality of teaching		Good	2
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Outstanding	1
Leadership and management		Good	2

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school.

- Achievement is improving as senior leaders have raised expectations and are rigorous in their drive for success. Pupils make good progress overall.
- Behaviour in the school is outstanding. There is a safe and caring approach and the welfare of pupils is given a high priority. Pupils engage in learning very well as they feel safe and are able to enjoy the opportunities to learn and develop increased independence.
- The quality of teaching is good and improving. At times it is outstanding, particularly in the Reception classes. The best of teaching is inspirational, encouraging pupils to develop communication skills very effectively and take part in a wide range of new and interesting activities.
- At times teaching does not yet focus precisely enough on all pupils' learning during lessons.
- The headteacher and the deputy headteacher are working very effectively to drive the school's further development. The work in developing assessment and tracking has been strong and they are aware of the need to develop this further. The headteacher and deputy headteacher have a very clear understanding of the school's strengths and have a strategy to develop leadership capacity at all levels.
- There are very strong links and transition planning with secondary provision to help ensure all pupils can build on the strong foundations built in Herons Dale School.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- The impact of teaching is not yet outstanding overall. Learning at times is not focused sharply enough and teachers do not always make best use of teaching assistants.
- The impact of leaders at all levels is not strong enough yet. The headteacher and deputy headteacher are able to bring about strong improvements.
- The governing body is developing. It is not yet systematic enough in holding the school to account and monitoring school performance.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed teaching and learning in 13 lessons. Some joint observations were undertaken with the headteacher and deputy headteacher as well as a learning walk through the school.
- Meetings were held with the headteacher, deputy headteacher, staff, pupils, a member of the governing body and a local authority representative.
- Inspectors looked at a wide range of documents, including policy documents, safeguarding arrangements, school evaluation and development plans. The school's student progress tracking data were scrutinised and minutes from governing body meetings considered.
- The 17 responses to the parents' on-line survey (Parent View) were considered as well as a letter from a pupil's family.
- Staff views were considered through the responses to the 40 questionnaires completed at the time of the inspection.

Inspection team

Paul Scott, Lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

Tim Feast

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- Herons Dale School caters for pupils with a wide range of special educational needs including severe learning difficulties (SLD), multiple learning difficulties (MLD), profound or multiple learning difficulties (PMLD), speech, language and communication needs and Autistic Spectrum Disorders (ASD). A number of pupils also demonstrate challenging behaviour.
- All pupils have a statement of special educational needs.
- The proportion of pupils eligible for the pupil premium (additional government funding) is above average.
- There are few pupils with minority ethnic heritage or who have a first language that is not English.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Develop the quality of teaching further by:
 - ensuring progress tracking information is used with even greater precision to promote more outstanding progress of individual pupils
 - further developing the skills of teaching assistants across the school to secure greater impact on learning
 - developing the strategic roles and responsibilities of middle leaders, ensuring that they have greater impact and accountability for pupil progress.
- Developing the governing body, by ensuring a systematic approach to monitoring and holding leaders to account.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils is good

- Attainment of pupils is below what would be expected for their age when they join the school. This is due to the range of learning difficulties they have. Pupils, including those who may not have attended an early years setting settle very well because of the excellent care and support they receive.
- Pupils make good and increasingly effective progress in developing communication, numeracy and social skills. This is outstanding in Reception classes, and at times in other lessons. During Reception class observations the precisely-focused teaching and highly effective use of a wide range of communication techniques, including very skilled use of signing, symbols and modelling, excellent use of voice by teachers and teaching assistants, brought about excellent engagement and learning by all pupils.
- Achievement on occasions requires improvement as learning objectives are not sharp enough and assessment of progress is not precise enough to enable plans to adapt to individual learners' needs.
- There are strong transition arrangements for the pupils when they join the school and when they move on. This ensures pupils settle quickly and feel safer and more secure about big changes in their lives.
- The school's progress tracking systems have developed very well over the last year and are used effectively to set challenging targets and improve accountability. Leaders understand how this can be developed further to drive further improvement and build an even clearer picture of a pupil's progress and the impact of school decisions.
- Achievement is improving and leaders have a clear approach to supporting and developing staff effectively to bring about further improvements. There are no significant differences between the achievements of different groups in the school including those eligible for the pupil premium.
- The personal development of all pupils is very strong and the promotion of equality is very effective. The school also promotes spiritual, moral, social and cultural development very well.

The quality of teaching is good

- The impact of teaching over time is good and improving very effectively. This is because leaders are clear about the strengths and weaknesses, and support improvement very well in the quality of teaching.
- There is inspiring teaching present in the school where teachers promote learning extremely well with clear class routines, including the use of songs to cue changes in activities. In these lessons highly effective communication development and exceptional integration of the work of teaching assistants and teachers make sure all pupils are cared for and progress with highly individualised attention. Adults assessed reactions and responses from pupils and were able to adapt opportunities to maximise progress in a wide range of aspects including communication and social skills.
- The monitoring of teaching and learning is effective and processes promote improvement. The staff are aware that the use of teaching assistants is not always as effective as it could be and learning outcomes are not always focused sharply enough for individual pupils.
- The relationships between staff and pupils are very positive, with pupils showing a great deal of trust in the adults that teach and care for them. This promotes a security in learning and a positive, productive ethos across the school, so pupils enjoy coming to school and enjoy learning.
- The school uses a range of services in partnership with other organisations highly effectively to increase good posture, mobility, speech and language development and wider health. This complements the school's work and demonstrates how the school thinks about the wider

development of pupils.

- There is effective staff development and leadership of teaching and learning is very strong. Senior leaders are able to assess strengths in teaching well and support teachers' and teaching assistants' development well. The development of strong assessment has been a key priority to drive improvements.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are outstanding

- Pupils' behaviour is outstanding. Pupils settle quickly in the school because of the care, commitment and passion of the staff. Pupils who have challenging behaviours improve quickly. Pupils are able to focus on the range of learning opportunities with little distraction.
- The use of rewards and praise is highly effective and pupils respond very well to successes they are able to achieve each lesson.
- There is a clear understanding and use of behaviour management strategies. Pupils are increasingly able to make use of equipment to reduce anxiety and stresses. As a consequence, classrooms are safe and productive and pupils feel confident to try new things, to answer questions in lessons and engaged with inspectors readily.
- Staff model good communication and this encourages and enables pupils to develop effective communication skills, and so are increasingly able to express their thoughts and make others aware of concerns and anxieties.
- Pupils are polite and friendly and demonstrate increasing empathy for their peers and for adults and an increasing awareness of social norms. Pupils are able to go to staff if they have a problem, but there are very few issues between pupils.
- Pupils enjoy school and attendance is generally very positive. Where attendance is not as strong this is largely due to specific medical needs that are managed well.

The leadership and management are good

- Since the last inspection, the headteacher and deputy headteacher have brought about significant improvements. This has included raising achievement and improving the quality of teaching. Leaders have also developed the progress tracking and assessment systems. This has resulted in the school being increasingly successful at meeting the individual needs of pupils.
- Leaders have an accurate view of the school's performance and how things need to be developed further. There is no complacency about the successes of the school so far but a clear passion for continued improvement.
- Leaders value the hard work of staff and the contribution of the many partner agencies and the local authority in supporting the school. Consequently, morale is high and staff are dedicated to the success of pupils and further school improvement.
- The pupil premium is targeted well to support individuals and it contributes well to their good achievement.
- The local authority has supported the school well in challenging and developing leadership capacity.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - The governing body is committed and has a range of skills to assist in challenging and holding leaders to account. The governors are increasingly aware of how they can further refine the impact they have in school improvement. Governors use salary progression effectively to support school improvement. Safeguarding arrangements meet requirements. The use of the pupil premium is monitored to ensure that eligible pupils' achievements are similar to their peers.

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

Unique reference number	126169
Local authority	West Sussex
Inspection number	402386

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	3–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	75
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Cllr. David Simmons
Headteacher	Trish Stepney
Date of previous school inspection	11–12 November 2009
Telephone number	01273 596904
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