

# The Garden School

Wordsworth Road, Hackney, London N16 8BZ

**Inspection dates** 11–12 June 2014

<b>Overall effectiveness</b>	Previous inspection:	N/A	N/A
	This inspection:	<b>Outstanding</b>	<b>1</b>
Achievement of pupils		Outstanding	1
Quality of teaching		Outstanding	1
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Outstanding	1
Leadership and management		Outstanding	1

## Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

### This is an outstanding school because:

- Teaching has improved rapidly since the school opened. It is consistently good, with a high proportion of outstanding lessons that ensures pupils make rapid progress.
- Pupils make excellent progress, especially in their communication, reading, writing and number work. This includes younger children in the Early Years Foundation Stage.
- Teachers have an outstanding knowledge of their pupils' abilities and learning needs. They have high expectations of the pupils' progress, including for the most able.
- Checks on the pupils' progress are detailed and accurate. This enables teachers to tailor activities precisely to make sure every pupil achieves as well as possible.
- Pupils who are eligible for government funding and those new to learning English make similar progress to their peers.
- Behaviour is outstanding. The school is a calm and welcoming place. Pupils enjoy school, attend well, and feel safe and secure.
- The wide range of subjects ensures pupils have interesting activities to participate in. Their learning is supported well through the exemplary use of communication aids and other visual cues to help the pupils understand their work better.
- The headteacher has led the development of an outstanding leadership team. Together they continually check on the effectiveness of teaching and inspire teachers and other adults to strive to help pupils achieve their best.
- Governors are well informed about all aspects of the school's work. As a result, they bring a high level of challenge and support to the school's leaders.

## Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 12 lessons and parts of lessons, all of which were joint observations with senior staff.
- Meetings were held with pupils, teachers, speech therapists, senior leaders, the Chair and Vice-Chair of the Governing Body and a representative from the local authority.
- Inspectors took into account the school's surveys of parents' opinions about the school. There were insufficient entries on Parent View (on-line questionnaire) to be considered. The inspection team also took account of the 63 completed staff questionnaires.
- The inspection team observed the school's work and looked at a range of documentation, including self-evaluation and development planning. Inspectors checked records of pupils' progress and behaviour since the school opened as well as monitoring reports on the quality of teaching and the range of subjects. Pupils' attendance records were analysed as well as all aspects of procedures relating to the safeguarding of the children.

## Inspection team

Melvyn Blackband, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Mary Geddes

Additional Inspector

## Full report

### Information about this school

- The school was opened in September 2013 in a new building, as a result of an amalgamation of two special schools. This new school provides for pupils with complex needs, primarily for those with a diagnosis of autism and those with severe learning difficulties. All the pupils have a statement of special educational needs. There are many more boys than girls.
- A much larger than average proportion of pupils qualify for additional government funding (pupil premium) because they are entitled to free school meals or are children who are looked after.
- A much larger than average proportion of pupils are from minority ethnic heritages, reflecting the make-up of the borough. A larger than average proportion speak English as an additional language.
- All Year 7 pupils benefit from additional government funding. There is no early entry to examinations.
- The headteacher was previously the headteacher of Horizon School, which was one of the schools amalgamated with the new school.

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

- Ensure that the meetings to discuss pupils' progress are always focused on how well the pupils are learning, so that support can be given in order to speed up their progress more rapidly.

## Inspection judgements

### **The achievement of pupils** is outstanding

- The standards reached by pupils remain low because of their complex learning disabilities. However, from low starting points, almost all pupils make excellent progress. Since the school opened, the performance of pupils has accelerated and virtually every pupil has met or exceeded their challenging targets.
- Pupils make excellent progress in communication, reading and writing. Their achievement in mathematics is slightly lower, but still outstanding. As a result of outstanding teaching, often using symbols and other visual cues such as signing, pupils are helped very successfully to make sense of their learning, and achieve well. The pupils' progress in communication is a strength of the school and helps them achieve well in other activities.
- Over time, all the pupils make excellent progress in early reading skills. Communication, at a variety of levels, is taught very successfully in the Early Years Foundation Stage and this prepares pupils well to make further progress. As pupils move through the school, they make outstanding progress in matching shapes then letters, and identifying the sounds letters make. Some, including the most able pupils, are able to form words to master the earliest books of reading schemes.
- The large proportion of pupils who are eligible for additional government funding, and those for whom English is an additional language, make as much progress as their peers in the school. This is because the school checks their progress continually and provides appropriate extra support where necessary.
- There are no differences in the progress of these pupils in communication, reading and writing, although pupils in Year 11 are, on average, one term behind in mathematics. There are specific action plans to remedy this. As a result of excellent teaching and the well-judged use of funding to provide extra speech and language support, the pupils have successfully narrowed the gap in their learning.
- Older pupils are well on course to leave with nationally accredited qualifications. They are prepared very well for the next stage in their education. Every pupil with severe learning difficulties has secured a place at a local college and those with autism have been successful in gaining places at specialist colleges. There will be no pupils from the current leavers who will not be going into full-time further education.

### **The quality of teaching** is outstanding

- Teaching is outstanding throughout the school, including the Early Years Foundation Stage, and this promotes the pupils' rapid progress. Teachers and other adults have an obvious enthusiasm for their work. Senior staff regularly and rigorously check on the teachers' performance and the progress of their pupils.
- Teachers have very high expectations of the pupils. Learning targets are challenging and consistently reviewed to ensure pupils are making the best progress possible. Activities are invariably interesting for the pupils. This engages their attention and adds to their concentration and motivation. The pupils enjoy their lessons.
- There are very effective teams of adults. Support staff have been very well trained and provide high quality teaching, under the teacher's direction, for individual pupils. All the pupils receive a very substantial amount of individual tuition and support. This is accompanied by excellent teaching of communication, whether by using objects of reference, symbols, or through carefully organised interaction through speech.
- Adults use specific communication procedures, adapted for each pupil, to check how well they understand their learning. Teachers are skilled in quickly adapting activities to take advantage of the pupils' small gains in understanding to accelerate their progress. Pupils consistently are made aware of when they have done well and how they can make their work better. As one

pupil stated confidently, 'The teacher shows us what to do.'

- The checking of pupils' progress is excellent. The checks in each lesson are scrupulously observed and recorded and targets adjusted, when appropriate. Teachers note each small step in learning and build on this to promote rapid progress. Teachers track pupils' achievements minutely and rapidly provide extra support or adapted targets should a pupil start to fall behind.
- Pupils' overall progress is regularly reviewed in 'progress meetings'. These are valuable in assessing the pupils' overall achievement in a variety of personal and independence skills but on occasion are not always sufficiently focused on the pupils' learning.

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

- Pupils' behaviour is outstanding. They love their school. Their attendance is in line with mainstream schools and is above other special schools. They enjoy their learning and have positive attitudes to their learning, in all subjects. This has a very strong impact on their progress.
- Their behaviour in the playground and at lunchtime is excellent. The school is calm and harmonious. Pupils enjoy the company of other pupils and adults. They are friendly and respectful to everyone. Over time, they gain a very good understanding of how important their behaviour is to other people and how it can affect their learning.
- Bullying in any form is extremely rare and there have been very few incidents of deliberately poor behaviour. The staff manage behaviour extremely well. There are exemplary policies and written procedures which are consistently followed as a result of ongoing training for all staff. Adults provide excellent role models, and rigorously monitor pupils' conduct and well-being. When on occasion a pupil becomes upset or confused and behaviour becomes challenging, incidents are dealt with professionally and positively. Pupils quickly calm down and continue their learning.
- The school's comprehensive records show a significant decrease in incidents over the year. Any incidents are carefully recorded and specific action taken, tailored for the individual pupil and based on the detailed knowledge adults have of their pupils' personal development.
- All adults are very well trained in providing for the needs of the pupils. Adults communicate extremely effectively with the pupils on a level and in a way best suited to the individual pupil. They make sure that pupils understand clearly what to do and what to expect in each situation. This has a significant positive impact in helping to reduce the pupils' anxiety and ensuring both lessons and less formal situations are calm and purposeful.
- Pupils, staff and parents are very positive about behaviour and safety and the way it is managed.
- The school's work to keep pupils safe and secure is outstanding. All safeguarding procedures are of a high standard and there are equally high standards of care. Pupils gradually learn how to deal with unsafe situations, such as crossing the road, through very good learning in personal, social and health education and through many opportunities to go out into the community.

### **The leadership and management** are outstanding

- The headteacher's experience and expertise has enabled her to establish very quickly a vision for the school's development which is driven by the ruthless pursuit of excellence. She has been very well supported by senior staff. There are well-advanced plans to appoint a range of middle leaders who will commence work in September.
- There is a culture of high expectations of both staff and pupils. Staff respond well to this and particularly to the opportunity for continual further training. Morale is high. Staff report that they feel proud to be part of the school team.
- Senior staff maintain detailed records of pupils' progress, personal development and behaviour. Pupils' achievement in a wide range of skills is tracked continually. Extra support is quickly put

into place should a pupil not perform as well as they should. Pupils who are eligible for additional government funding and those for whom English is an additional language receive well-directed support. As a result, the pupils make rapid progress, especially in communication, reading and writing. There is no discrimination and the school ensures the equal opportunities for pupils to do as well as they can.

- Leaders check on all aspects of teachers' performance, including the setting of targets. This is effectively linked to national standards and procedures to set targets for the continual improvement in teaching. Good performance is rewarded by increased responsibility and increases in salary. Weaker performance is tackled robustly. Strategies to raise standards have resulted in a rapid improvement in teaching since the school opened.
- Due to regular monitoring of pupils' progress and teaching, the school evaluates its own effectiveness extremely well. Development planning is soundly based on accurate evidence and is focused tightly on further opportunities for improvement. The school is developing an impressive track record of success. Leaders are very well supported and challenged to make continuous improvements by the governing body and the local authority, which maintains a 'light-touch' approach to the school. There is an outstanding capacity to improve further.
- The learning activities are very well matched to the pupils' needs. There is a broad range of subjects. The oldest pupils follow courses which apply their skills in English and mathematics across a range of community-based work-related learning. They benefit from weekly links with local colleges. Adults adapt work skilfully to promote the pupils' communication skills and development in basic skills of literacy and numeracy. Sports funding for primary aged pupils is used to enable them to participate in social activities with a sporting flavour. Pupils enjoy the many after-school sports clubs on offer.
- The school ensures that pupils make excellent progress in their personal development. They take part in visits to the market, art galleries and museums and there are many visitors to school such as dance, drama and opera groups. Pupils visit places of religious significance. Over time, the pupils learn to reflect on situations, to deal with social occasions and to control their own behaviour. The range of subjects contributes very well to their academic skills and physical development and successfully promotes their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.
- Relations with parents are very positive. There is a high attendance at meetings about pupils such as Annual Reviews. Parents report that they feel very satisfied with the school's work
- Safeguarding arrangements are secure and meet current statutory requirements.
- **The governance of the school:**
  - Governors are well informed about pupils' progress, including school performance information, how it compares with similar schools, and the management of teachers' performance. They effectively oversee financial control, including the salary arrangements for teaching. They maintain close supervision of additional government funding and regularly check the impact on the pupils' progress and well-being. They often visit the school, informally observing teaching and speaking with staff. Consequently, governors are able to challenge school leaders very effectively. They take part in regular training, such as in aspects of child protection and safeguarding and in the use of performance information on pupils' progress.

## 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>	100311
<b>Local authority</b>	Hackney
<b>Inspection number</b>	439933

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>	4–16
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	114
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	David Lowry
<b>Executive Headteacher</b>	Kt Khan
<b>Head of School</b>	Pat Quigley
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	N/A
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