

Hillside Specialist School and College

Ribchester Road, Longridge, Preston, Lancashire PR3 3XB

Inspection dates

7–8 February 2018

Overall effectiveness	Good
Effectiveness of leadership and management	Good
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Good
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Good
Outcomes for pupils	Good
Early years provision	Good
16 to 19 study programmes	Good
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Good

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school

- Leaders provide a personalised curriculum at Hillside School which, along with the creative teaching, enables pupils to thrive and make good progress from their starting points.
- Staff ensure that classroom environments effectively support the needs of the pupils.
- Teachers' assessments identify pupils' sensory needs well. Interventions are planned by the school to support pupils to regulate their sensory needs, which in turn helps them to access learning.
- New systems allow teachers to monitor the small steps of progress made by pupils. This information does not currently give leaders the whole-school picture of educational and personal progress.
- Most teachers are skilled in the use of specific questions to deepen learning. This is not consistent across all classrooms.
- Teachers and teaching assistants plan learning that both challenges and supports pupils. On occasion, learning is not closely matched to pupils' needs and as a result, time is not used effectively.
- The acting headteacher, governors and the senior leadership team have continued to secure improvements. They have embedded a culture of self-improvement and developed leaders at all levels throughout the school.
- Pupils behave well, feel safe and are well supported by staff. Staff create a welcoming and friendly environment from the moment that pupils arrive.
- Children in the early years make good progress through effective teaching. Children are well prepared for the next stage of their learning.
- The post-16 college provision provides a personalised curriculum that prepares students well for the next phase in life. Independent skills are developed alongside qualifications and work skills.
- The previously high levels of persistent absence have reduced. However, pupils' attendance remains below average.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Strengthen the systems for reporting on whole school performance so that:
 - senior leaders and governors have a stronger, whole-school picture of academic progress, including the progress of disadvantaged pupils and other groups of pupils
 - pupils' personal progress over time, including their social, emotional, communication, behaviour, speech and language development, is clear.
- Further improve teaching and learning by:
 - sharing good practice to embed effective questioning techniques, so all staff including teaching assistants can probe and develop pupils' understanding and deepen their learning
 - making sure that good use is made of time in lessons and that activities closely match pupils' learning needs.
- Further develop and embed new strategies so that pupils' overall absence is closer to the national average.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Good

- There has been a period of instability within the leadership team. Despite this significant challenge over the last few years, leaders have maintained the good quality of education in the school and have continued to secure improvements.
- Senior leaders have worked successfully since the last inspection to grow and develop leadership throughout the school. They have clearly defined the roles and responsibilities of leaders at all levels. Middle leaders are well supported so they continuously improve their skills and knowledge.
- The assistant headteacher has implemented a clear system to allow teachers to assess the progress that pupils make in a range of subjects. As a result, teachers and pupils can see the small steps of progress in greater detail.
- Since the last inspection, the school community has changed considerably. The school now has a 16 to 19 college on site. The local authority now refers pupils who have autistic spectrum disorder (ASD) and are of higher ability. Leaders have responded to this change quickly by introducing a wider curriculum and additional qualifications. The timetable fits around the needs of the pupils. Consequently, pupils are both challenged and supported well.
- Since the last inspection, leaders have developed the role of higher-level teaching assistants. These assistants now take the lead in planning extra activities to meet pupils' sensory, communication, social and emotional, educational and behavioural needs. These activities contribute effectively to the good progress that pupils make.
- Leaders are secure in their evaluations of teaching and learning. They accurately identify the school's strengths and areas for development and devise appropriate actions to bring about improvement. For example, subject leaders now monitor their subjects and provide constructive feedback to teachers.
- The local authority provides effective support. This has allowed the acting headteacher and governors to drive improvement throughout the last few years.

Governance of the school

- The unavoidable instability within the leadership team has not distracted the governing body from fulfilling their statutory duties. There has been turbulence in the past, but governors took the decision to streamline the governing body with fewer members who are fully committed and proactive.
- The chair of the governing body, although relatively new, is an experienced governor and has a clear vision for the direction of the governing body and the school. She has already had a positive impact on raising the level of challenge to senior leaders. For example, governing body minutes show how challenging questions are asked of leaders about attendance data. Governors now drill down into the school's data on progress, finance and how pupil premium funding is spent.
- There is a committed and passionate group of parent governors who work strategically but who also support practically if needed. For example, one parent governor acted as

'meet and greet' person at the last parents' evening to chat to parents about their needs and how the school can help to support parents. Another parent governor has taken responsibility for improving and implementing the staff well-being survey.

- Governors take part in training, including safeguarding, safer recruitment and appraisal. Governors are actively involved with the recruitment of staff and the appraisal of the acting headteacher.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- There is a very strong culture of safeguarding in the school. Safeguarding systems are thorough and records are detailed. Systems, procedures and practices are followed, and as a result, pupils are safe. Staff know the pupils well and the high staff-to-pupil ratio ensures that pupils are well cared for and their needs are met. Inspectors saw no evidence of bullying and pupils report that if they have any disagreements they talk to staff, who deal with issues swiftly and 'sort it out'.
- Most pupils arrive and leave school by taxi. This is a very well-managed operation. Systems and procedures are well defined. Staff warmly greet pupils when they arrive, making them feel welcome and safe.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Good

- Positive relationships between staff and pupils promote a positive attitude to learning throughout the school. Pupils said that they enjoy their lessons and that 'teachers help us a lot'.
- Adults support pupils well in lessons. Staff know how to respond to pupils, how to arrange their learning environment and how to support their sensory needs. As a result, pupils' autism and behaviour is managed well and pupils know how to learn at their best.
- In the majority of lessons, teachers and teaching assistants challenge pupils through effective questioning. Consequently, pupils deepen their learning and remain engaged in their task. Sometimes teaching assistants are less effective in using questioning techniques to improve learning.
- In lessons, teachers encourage pupils to learn from their mistakes. For example, in a mathematics lesson in key stage 2, the teacher encouraged a pupil to think about the mistake he had made in his pattern and allowed him to work the problem out himself.
- The curriculum is personalised and varied. Staff respond well to pupils' educational and personal needs and interests. In a Year 11 lesson, the teacher developed challenges based on pupils' interests, covering science, languages and art. As a result, pupils were engaged and expanded their learning.
- Teachers are creative in their planning and this promotes enthusiasm and a love for learning in the classroom. Teachers' use of technical language and subject-specific language is used well to reinforce and embed learning. For example, in an English lesson in key stage 3, pupils used role-play to act out key scenes from 'Macbeth'. They

had only been studying the play for a few days but demonstrated good knowledge about the characters and plot and clearly enjoyed their lesson.

- Teachers plan their classroom environment well to meet the needs of their pupils. In some classes, pupils work at individual workstations. This helps them to concentrate on their learning without being distracted by too much visual stimulation. In other classes, there are small sensory rooms where pupils can go when they need to have their sensory needs met. Some rooms have soft play equipment and mood lighting, which enables the pupils to regulate their senses and then be able to rejoin the learning environment.
- Teachers have aspirational targets for their pupils. Pupils can see the progress they make in both their learning targets and their personal targets. As a result, pupils are motivated to improve further.
- In the majority of lessons, time is used well, and activities are closely matched to pupils' learning needs and are sufficiently demanding. At times, teaching is not as closely matched to pupils' abilities and as a result pupils make less progress or miss out on the time to explore and deepen learning.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Good

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good.
- Pupils are well cared for and adults know pupils well. Staff respond quickly and effectively to pupils' needs in a personalised way.
- Evidence from case studies of pupils show the personal journeys that pupils have made throughout their time at the school. Pupils make good progress in social and emotional, communication, speech and language skills.
- The school is very focused on building self-confidence and independence skills. This work over many years is evident in the college, where students manage their own needs well. Some students study, socialise and work with minimum adult support.
- Pupils take part in a range of visits and extra-curricular activities. College students attended a residential activity and took part in canoeing, walking, go-karting, high ropes and archery. For some students it was their first residential experience. Trips to local parks, cafés and supermarkets are all encouraged across the school to improve social and communication skills.
- Pupils learn about other faiths in school. Classrooms are decorated with lights for Diwali and trips take place to places of worship, including mosques, temples and churches.
- Pupils have their sensory needs met in a very personalised way. Assessments provide teachers and parents with an individualised sensory diet. This supports pupils to regulate their sensory needs, which in turn enables pupils to access the curriculum. For example, pupils have access to additional time outside, to engage with specific tactile and sensory experiences, use of therapy balls or other interventions personalised to the pupil.

- Pupils said that they are happy in school, enjoy being with their friends and were able to talk about their favourite lessons.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good.
- Effective behaviour management systems minimise poor behaviour and promote good behaviour
- Pupils enjoy playtime and being able to use the stimulating outside play areas. Physical opportunities are maximised through play. The high staff-to-pupil ratio and staff vigilance keep pupils safe.
- Because of the strong relationships with staff, pupils listen to and respond to staff guidance. Pupils were observed to adapt their behaviour to staff coaching.
- Behaviour in lessons is good and when pupils do need help staff are skilled in de-escalation techniques to minimise serious incidents.
- Leaders have successfully reduced persistent absence by implementing new systems, including improved communication with parents and carers. However, despite leaders' efforts, overall attendance remains below the national average.

Outcomes for pupils

Good

- Almost all pupils make consistently strong progress across the curriculum from their different starting points.
- Pupils have aspirational educational and personal targets. Most pupils make good progress because the highly creative curriculum and effective teaching meet pupils' needs well.
- The progress of disadvantaged pupils is equal to or in some cases better than that of other pupils. The school has invested in resources to support pupils' sensory and communication needs, which has had a positive impact on progress.
- The pupil cohort is gradually changing, with some most-able pupils now joining the school in the early years and key stage 1. Senior leaders have already responded to this change. Outcomes in the early years and key stage 1 show that the most able pupils make expected progress and, in some cases, better than expected progress in some subjects.
- Case studies of pupils' progress show a very strong improvement over time. This includes progress in pupils' social and emotional development, language, communication, speech, vocabulary and behaviour. Leaders' systems to check pupils' holistic progress do not ensure that this is captured as clearly as their academic progress.

Early years provision

Good

- Children enter the early years with knowledge and skills that are well below those typical for their age. Because of effective teaching, they make good progress and are

well prepared for Year 1. Staff use strategies that meet children's needs to ensure that they are ready for their next step in school.

- Teachers plan activities well and ensure that they keep children interested. For example, when the teacher told the story of 'The Gingerbread Man' with puppets and pictures, children paid close attention.
- Teachers ensure that children develop a range of essential skills such as social skills, movement and balance. Fine motor skills are encouraged by using brightly-coloured bead tracks.
- Children behave well and staff have taught them to follow instructions and routines. For example, staff skilfully use a song to encourage children to move to their next activity or to line up to go for lunch. Teachers give well-targeted praise to children who, for instance, take turns or share with other children.
- Children show that they feel safe through their good behaviour. Adults manage behaviour effectively, enabling children to learn in a safe environment. The use of praise helps and encourages pupils to engage in tasks and activities.
- The joint leaders of the early years are new to the post but have already planned actions to bring about further improvements. For example, in collaboration with the local authority, they have devised a method to refine their recording of children's progress to make their next steps even clearer.
- Leaders involve parents closely in their child's education. Leaders visit the homes of children before they start school to work with parents and carers. This ensures that leaders have a full picture of the needs of their child.
- Transition arrangements before children join the school are strong. 'Stay and play' mornings allow children, parents and carers to get used to the school and staff before a child starts their education.
- Communication books allow constant dialogue between staff and parents about their children's progress. Staff also provide parents and carers with suggestions for activities or strategies they can use at home to support their children's development.
- Adults mainly support children well with questions and modelling of language relevant to the learning. However, they sometimes miss opportunities to deepen children's learning, such as allowing enough time for children to enjoy sensory experiences.
- Safeguarding procedures mirror the strong culture of the school. There are no breaches of statutory welfare requirements.

16 to 19 study programmes

Good

- Leaders and staff have created an ethos and atmosphere conducive to a happy and productive post-16 college environment.
- Learning is very personalised to meet the needs of the students. Students have personalised timetables and accreditation opportunities.
- The curriculum includes English and mathematics alongside a range of other subjects, including cooking, physical education, personal care, art, music and work experience.
- The college offers qualifications that allow the small learning steps to be recognised

alongside functional skills in mathematics and English. For some students there is also the opportunity to undertake qualifications in art and music. Leaders are focused on the future and plan to widen the accreditation opportunities still further.

- The college's aim is to support students to improve their independent skills. This is evident through lesson and social time. In one lesson, students worked with minimum support to prepare spaghetti carbonara and garlic bread in time to deliver to staff and students for lunch. Students followed visual or written recipes. Staff used every opportunity to enhance learning through focused questions around portion sizes, calculating amounts and estimating as well as reading and communication skills. Activities such as these prepare students well adulthood.
- The college provides further opportunities to support students' preparation for adulthood. For example, the common room is used by students with minimum staff interaction and encourages students to socialise with each other. In addition, at lunchtime, some students make their own lunch, sit together to eat and clean up again afterwards.
- Work experience is tailored to meet the needs and aspirations of students. Placements include cafés, animal care and retail. Students benefit from a real work situation and return to college displaying improved self-confidence and independence.
- Students' progression routes at 19 are planned with the student and families well in advance. The college's first leavers in 2017 all progressed into a positive destination. Leaders continue to work with a range of providers including colleges, residential colleges and supported living placements to expand the possible opportunities for students post-19.

School details

Unique reference number	131479
Local authority	Lancashire
Inspection number	10042411

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

Type of school	All-through special school
School category	Maintained special
Age range of pupils	3 to 19
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in 16 to 19 study programmes	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	85
Of which, number on roll in 16 to 19 study programmes	16
Appropriate authority	Lancashire local authority
Chair	Rachel Younger
Acting Headteacher	Paul Leaper
Telephone number	01772 782205
Website	www.hillside.lancsngfl.ac.uk
Email address	hillside@hillside.lancs.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	5–6 December 2012

Information about this school

- The school is a specialist school that educates pupils with autism. Pupils must be referred through Lancashire local authority. All pupils have an education, health and care plan for ASD.
- Most pupils are of White British heritage. A small proportion speak English as an additional language. There are more boys than girls on roll.
- The proportion of disadvantaged pupils is slightly above the national average.
- No pupils attend any alternative provision.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed teaching and learning in lessons across a range of subjects, including some joint observations with senior leaders. The lead inspector carried out work scrutiny with the assistant headteacher.
- Inspectors talked informally to pupils during lessons, breaks and lunchtimes. The lead inspector met with a small group of pupils. Discussions were held with staff, including senior and middle leaders, classroom teachers and support staff. A meeting was held with the chair of the governing body, two parent governors and the previous chair of the governing body. Inspectors held telephone conversations with the local authority's school adviser and special educational needs area manager.
- Inspectors took account of the 23 responses to Ofsted's online 'Parent View' survey and had conversations with a small number of parents.
- Inspectors scrutinised a range of documents. These included the school's self-evaluation and development plan, information about the school's performance and a selection of policies, including those relating to safeguarding.

Inspection team

Julie Bather, lead inspector

Ofsted Inspector

Mark Quinn

Her Majesty's Inspector

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