

Whitefield Schools and Centre

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	103109
Local Authority	Waltham Forest
Inspection number	376821
Inspection dates	3–4 November 2011
Reporting inspector	James Bowden

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

Type of school	Special
School category	Foundation special
Age range of pupils	3–19
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in the sixth form	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	315
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	44
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mrs Caroline Sheppard
Principal	Ms Elaine Colquhoun
Date of previous school inspection	7–8 July 2009
School address	Macdonald Road Walthamstow London E17 4AZ
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Age group	3–19
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by four additional inspectors. The inspectors visited 23 lessons, seeing 22 teachers. Meetings were held with the principal, the senior leadership team and others with posts of responsibility. In addition, meetings were held with the Vice-chair of the Governing Body, the governor with responsibility for safeguarding and the Ex-Chair of the Governing Body. Inspectors observed the school's work, and looked at development plans, curriculum planning, whole school policies, the school's tracking data showing students' progress, teachers' lesson plans and samples of students' work. They met formally with two small groups of students, attended an assembly and observed students arriving and leaving at the end of the school day. The lead inspector analysed questionnaires from 167 parents and carers, 85 students and 71 staff.

The inspection team reviewed many aspects of the school's work. It looked in detail at a number of key areas.

- Does the school have a consistent track record of improving students' achievement at the end of Key Stage 4 and at the end of the sixth-form?
- Does inspection evidence support the school's self-evaluation that teaching is sufficiently challenging for students, enabling all groups to learn effectively and make the best progress possible?
- How effective is leadership at all levels in moving the school onwards and upwards?
- The school highlights the outreach and partnership work it undertakes as a significant strength. How does this work impact directly on students' learning?

Information about the school

Whitefield Schools and Centre provide for pupils and students with profound, multiple, and severe learning difficulties and autistic spectrum disorders. The majority has autistic spectrum disorders. In addition, a minority has a range of complex needs including sensory impairment, hearing impairment, physical impairment and delayed cognitive development. All have a statement of special educational needs and a high proportion use alternative or augmentative methods of communication. The establishment consists of three schools, each with its own head of school: Sensory Impairment and Learning Difficulties (SILD) aged 3 to 19; Communication Interaction, Primary (CIP) aged 3 to 11; and, Communication Interaction, Secondary (CIS) aged 11 to 19. Currently, eleven Communication Interaction Secondary post-16 students are part of a pilot scheme based at a local Further Education college where Whitefield staff teach key skills and enable students to access a range of vocational courses taught there. The establishment also runs the Rangoonwala Centre for Professional Development and Information, based on-site and manages the local authority's Hearing Impairment Support Service. There is also a Family Support and Outreach service.

The largest group of students is White British but the proportion from other ethnic groups is much higher than average, with the next largest groups being Black/Black British and Asian/Asian British. The majority come from the school's own local authority but others come from a total of 13 different local authorities. Boys

outnumber girls by three to one. Six students are looked after by their local authorities and the proportion known to be eligible for free school meals is well above the national average. The proportion who speak English as an additional language is higher than average; of this group the highest proportions of home languages are Urdu and Somali.

The principal was appointed in September, 2011.

The school has gained the Artsmark Gold Award and the International Schools Award amongst a number of other awards.

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?

1

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

1

Main findings

Whitefield Schools and Centre continues to be an outstandingly successful establishment. It succeeds fully in its core aim of providing the highest possible standards of education and support for children, families and staff. Every child really does matter. The dignity of each student is respected and all individuals treated without judgement or comparison. The quality of care, guidance and support is of the highest quality, which underpins the ethos of the schools and ensures students' individual needs are met. The overwhelming majority of parents and carers are happy with their children's experience at the school. One summed up the typical view noting, 'All the staff are doing a wonderful job. I can go to them when I need help regarding my child's behaviour, so they don't only support the children but also the parents.'

The Early Years Foundation Stage gives pupils an excellent start. Students go on to achieve exceptionally well up to the end of Key Stage 4 and on into the sixth form, because of the dovetailed education and support package provided by the schools. Schools' data shows progress in learning has continued to improve over time in relation to students' starting points. There are no significant differences between the achievement of different groups of students, including boys or girls, ethnic groups, those who speak English as an additional language, those known to be entitled to free school meals and those whose circumstances make them most vulnerable. One parent noted, 'My child has made so much progress that at the start I never believed possible'. The quality of students' personal progress is also a strength. Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding; aspects of this having been recognised by the Artsmark Gold Award. In addition, outcomes as a result of the schools' participation in the British Council's Comenius project, which involves working with other special schools in six European countries, and other work with an international perspective has been recognised by the International Schools Award.

Teaching is outstanding because it is lively, engaging and purposeful. It is carefully planned to meet the individual needs of all. Students' progress, including the small steps made by those in the Sensory Impairment and Learning Difficulties School, is recorded and tracked carefully and used effectively to inform lesson planning. The schools' excellent bespoke curriculum, including a multi-sensory focus, provides access to the broad National Curriculum as well as, for older students, offering individual pathways to a variety of appropriate accreditations. Professionals within the schools, and in other schools, benefit greatly from the Rangoonwala Centre for Professional Development, which organises a wide range of professional

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development courses, and the Outreach Service. This develops and updates current staff practice, which in turn has an impact on improving the learning and progress of students even further.

Although there were significant changes in senior leadership in January 2011, acting senior leaders ensured a continuing focus on improving outcomes. This has remained a key focus for the new leadership team, in place since September 2011. The monitoring and evaluation of teaching and learning has been honed, as has strategic planning. Highly-effective self-evaluation enables the establishment to focus sharply on areas where further improvement is needed. New senior leaders have identified a need to achieve greater consistency and efficiency across the schools in the leadership and management of the Early Years Foundation Stage and the sixth form. The experienced members of the governing body act as a very effective supportive and, when appropriate, critical friend of the establishment. They work closely with senior leaders to ensure that safeguarding procedures have the highest priority, which has resulted in outstanding practice. Curriculum content and a wealth of enrichment activities support the schools' excellent promotion of community cohesion within the schools themselves, the local community and beyond, at an international level. In light of its excellent track record, the establishment's current capacity for improvement is outstanding.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Build further on existing strengths in the leadership and management of the Early Years Foundation stage the sixth form by simplifying structures to ensure even greater consistency and efficiency across the schools.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils**1**

In lessons, individual students and different groups, regardless of their special educational needs and/or disabilities, or their backgrounds, consolidate and build on previous learning and make excellent progress in new learning. They benefit greatly from focused individual attention from all adults in the room. In a lesson in the Sensory Impairment and Learning Difficulties School, students with complex special needs made impressive progress in recognising and responding to a range of stimuli, including a low-level plasma television screen, by using a variety of switch technologies. In a physical education lesson in the Communication Interaction Secondary School, not only did students make impressive progress in the use of specific games skills, they also worked very well as individuals, pairs and small groups to practise these skills.

The vast majority of students who completed the Ofsted questionnaire said they felt safe in the school. This was confirmed by students in a discussion group with an inspector. One commented, 'I'm safe in school, really safe.' Another immediately added, 'In school it's so safe that I've made friends.' Students respect each other's differences and have excellent relationships with their peers and with staff. Although

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there are occasional frustrations, rather than untoward intentions, learning was not interrupted by any disruptive behaviour during the inspection. Students respond well to the clear and consistent routines used by staff in managing behaviour. The atmosphere in the dining area at lunchtimes is excellent, as is their behaviour when they leave the school at the end of the day. Students are enthusiastically involved in a broad range of responsibilities and charitable activities to improve the school and the lives of others. In terms of their personal development, students’ preparation for the future is very strong but because their basic academic skills are generally very low their overall economic well-being is good rather than outstanding.

These are the grades for pupils’ outcomes

Pupils’ achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	1
Taking into account:	*
Pupils’ attainment ¹	
The quality of pupils’ learning and their progress	1
The quality of learning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress	1
The extent to which pupils feel safe	1
Pupils’ behaviour	1
The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles	1
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	1

How effective is the provision?

Students told the inspectors that they enjoy lessons and learning new things. This is because teachers and all adults in the room know the needs of the students extremely well. Their sensitive interventions help students keep focused throughout the lessons. Praise is never overly effusive and is used wisely by all adults to encourage perseverance and successful outcomes. This was particularly effective in an excellent Key Stage 3 country dancing lesson where all students were encouraged to take part, each supported by an adult. Teachers are particularly adept at using new technologies to support teaching and enliven learning. Class management is highly effective because it is consistently calm, yet purposeful, and results in students responding very well to teachers’ expectations in this respect.

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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The curriculum contributes highly effectively to students’ academic progress and personal development, including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. There is an excellent focus on communication skills, which enables greater accessibility by students to the range of activities and subjects offered. Throughout the year an extensive range of enrichment activities, both within the schools and beyond, extend students’ learning and develop further their interests. Links with local secondary schools, further education colleges and other providers are of particular benefit for older students, adding breadth to what is offered.

All adults in the schools work hard to support and help each individual student in very specific ways, including the most vulnerable regardless of background. This carefully tailored individual support ensures that all receive support of the very highest quality. As a result, students’ welfare requirements are fully met and all are looked after in a safe, healthy and caring environment. A particularly well managed and executed programme of reviews is effective in supporting students on arrival, throughout their time at the schools and when they leave. Parents and carers too are supported and involved in their children’s education and welfare. One parent commented, ‘Whitefield School has been like a rock to me.’ Above average attendance is as a result of the schools’ effective procedures for reducing absence, particularly unauthorised absences. Those students who are absent because of medical needs receive appropriate support from the schools.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The quality of teaching	1
Taking into account:	
The use of assessment to support learning	1
The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils’ needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships	1
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	1

How effective are leadership and management?

Staff and governors are fully supportive of the school’s ethos. They share the senior leadership’s vision and leadership and management at all levels is very effective in securing improvement. Rigorous monitoring is highly effective in sustaining and enhancing the high quality of teaching and learning. The governing body is highly effective because of its wealth of experience and expertise. The governing body has a strong awareness of safeguarding, particularly in ensuring risks associated with new technologies are taken fully into account. It has ensured statutory requirements are met. Comprehensive safeguarding procedures are well established and scrupulously adhered to. The schools’ outstanding collaborative working with an extensive range of other professionals and specialist providers extends curriculum opportunities and supports students’ medical and personal needs very well. These partnerships make a very significant contribution to all aspects of students’ progress.

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In addition, the schools have worked hard and successfully to engage parents and carers through the Family Support Service. One parent noted, 'I feel I can go to speak to any number of professionals involved with my child if I'm worried or even for an unimportant enquiry.' The schools are highly effective in ensuring all students have equality of opportunity. They tackle any discrimination and achieve an effective ethos of inclusion with no underachievement of any group. The school's work in promoting community cohesion within the school, locally and beyond is outstanding and underpinned by effective policies and planning for provision. Given the outcomes the school achieves it is providing outstanding 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	1
The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers	1
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	1
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	1

Early Years Foundation Stage

The Early Years Foundation Stage is highly effective in ensuring the needs of individual children are met. This is because the careful and in-depth initial assessments are used particularly well to plan individual programmes for the unique challenges facing each child. Staff regularly record children's progress against their targets and share this with parents and carers. One parent commented, 'Teachers are very supportive and knowledgeable, always happy to find time to discuss any issues. Overall, I find my child could not be at a better placement at the moment.' The great majority of children, regardless of their background or special educational needs and/or disabilities, make outstanding progress in relation to their starting points. Excellent staff expertise was evident in a double nursery and reception children class, where there was highly effective interaction with children and motivation to enable them to solve problems. Every opportunity possible was used to introduce new words and encourage children to communicate with the staff. High levels of care and support for the individual child, including for their medical needs where appropriate, and a sharp focus on safe practice underpin the all-round

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outstanding progress children make. The new Early Years Foundation Stage Centre, opened in September, is making a strong contribution to the learning and development of the children from the Communication Interaction Primary School based there and access is being extended to children in the Sensory Impairment and Learning Difficulties School. Both heads of these schools lead and manage provision for the Early Years Foundation Stage highly effectively and have continued to build on the strengths identified at the previous inspection.

These are the grades for the Early Years Foundation Stage

Overall effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage	1
Taking into account:	
Outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage	1
The quality of provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage	1
The effectiveness of leadership and management of the Early Years Foundation Stage	1

Sixth form

Students are very positive about their experiences. After the school’s annual awards evening held earlier in the week, one told an inspector that the awards recognised the hard work of individuals and commented, ‘It’s really a good feeling when you get an award.’ Those based at the local further education college said they appreciated the opportunity to be independent, including, for many, the opportunity to travel independently. Students make outstanding progress in achieving success in accredited courses as well as making great strides in developing their independence and personal attributes. In the Sensory Impairment and Learning Difficulties School, students rise to the challenges offered by a range of carefully-planned activities to develop and improve their communication and interaction skills. In one such lesson, students thoroughly enjoyed their learning and made excellent progress because of excellent planning, precise ongoing assessment and an individualised approach. The use of a wide range of stimuli, including changes to the music, and excellent use of new technologies underpinned this. Teaching is excellent because teachers know their students well and plan lessons to ensure the work matches their capabilities and learning needs. Because the curriculum is tailored exceptionally well to their individual needs and because of the highly effective care, guidance and support they receive, not only from the school but from a broad range of other professionals, students are particularly well prepared for the next stage of their lives when leaving the school. All move on to further education, training or specialist supported care placements. Both heads of the Communication Interaction Secondary School and the Sensory Impairment and Learning Difficulties School are highly effective in leading and managing sixth form provision and have continued to build on the strengths identified at the previous inspection.

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These are the grades for the sixth form

Overall effectiveness of the sixth form	1
Taking into account:	1
Outcomes for students in the sixth form	1
The quality of provision in the sixth form	1
Leadership and management of the sixth form	1

Views of parents and carers

The proportion of questionnaires returned was well above the national average for special schools. Of those returned, almost all parents and carers say the school keeps their children safe, informs them about their progress and that they are happy with their children’s experience at the school. This inspection endorses these views. A very small minority feel that their children are not making enough progress at the school and that the school does not help them support their children’s learning. Inspectors found that students as a whole make excellent progress and that there is effective support for families regarding children’s learning.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Whitefield School and Centre 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 167 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 315 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	120	72	43	26	2	1	1	1
The school keeps my child safe	128	77	34	20	2	1	0	0
The school informs me about my child's progress	123	74	38	23	5	3	1	1
My child is making enough progress at this school	92	55	64	38	8	5	3	2
The teaching is good at this school	106	63	56	34	1	1	2	1
The school helps me to support my child's learning	89	53	66	40	9	5	2	1
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	86	51	71	43	4	2	1	1
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)	67	40	80	48	2	1	2	1
The school meets my child's particular needs	103	62	59	35	2	1	2	1
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	92	55	66	40	1	1	1	1
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	106	63	56	34	3	2	1	1
The school is led and managed effectively	101	60	59	35	1	1	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	122	73	41	25	1	1	2	1

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 all 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	46	48	6	0
Primary schools	6	47	40	7
Secondary schools	12	39	38	11
Sixth forms	13	42	41	3
Special schools	28	49	19	4
Pupil referral units	14	45	31	10
All schools	10	46	37	7

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 are for the period 1 September 2010 to 31 December 2010 and are consistent with the latest published official statistics about maintained school inspection outcomes (see www.ofsted.gov.uk).

The sample of schools inspected during 2010/11 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.

Sixth form figures reflect the judgements made for the overall effectiveness of the sixth form in secondary schools, special schools and pupil referral units.

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 pupils' 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.



11 November 2011

Dear Children, Pupils and Students

Inspection of Whitefield Schools and Centre, London E17 4AZ

Not so long ago, four of us came to see how well you are getting on. We also wanted to know whether we could suggest anything to make things even better for you. We thoroughly enjoyed our time at the schools, meeting you as small groups, and individually in lessons and around the school. The great majority of those of you who responded to the Ofsted questionnaire said you felt safe at the schools, learned a lot and felt that adults in the school cared about you. We can see why.

These are some of the good things we found.

- All the staff care for you and make sure you are safe and happy.
- You all make excellent progress in your academic and personal development.
- Lessons are very interesting.
- Teachers and other adults give you lots of help and support.
- There are so many interesting and enjoyable things for you to do.
- The school works really well with lots of other people, including your parents and carers, to help you.
- The new Principal of the schools has plans to make things even better for you.

This is the one thing that we have asked the schools to do so that they will improve:

- Look at how the Early Years Foundation Stage and the sixth form can be run even more effectively and efficiently.

You too can all help by continuing to enjoy your learning. Many thanks for letting us see what you were learning in school during our visit.

Yours sincerely

James Bowden
Lead inspector

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