

Inspection of a school judged outstanding for overall effectiveness before September 2024: Stephen Hawking School

Brunton Place, London E14 7LL

Inspection dates:

14 and 15 January 2025

Outcome

Stephen Hawking School has taken effective action to maintain the standards identified at the previous inspection.

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils are happy to come to this excellent school. This is clear from the joyful way that they enter in the morning and the positive energy that they put into their lessons throughout the day. There is something truly special about the way pupils and staff interact. Pupils are given time and support to make choices, communicate how they are feeling and develop their independence.

The school has extremely high expectations for pupils. This can be seen in the 'can-do' attitude to what pupils can achieve. Pupils enjoy playing and working alongside their friends, and unkind behaviour is extremely rare. Staff have a detailed understanding of each pupil's complex needs and the ways that they might be vulnerable. Staff are committed to keeping pupils safe and are vigilant in checking on pupils' safety and well-being throughout the day.

Pupils enjoy the many ways that the school promotes their physical health and development. These include, for example, physiotherapy programmes, exercises on the trampoline, hydrotherapy, bicycles and tricycles and other accessible ways to develop healthy lifestyles. The school benefits from a strong team of therapists and health staff who work in a coordinated way with school staff for the benefit of the pupils.

What does the school do well and what does it need to do better?

The school has constructed an ambitious and pupil-centred curriculum, which is sharply focused on the individual needs of the pupils. Leaders have made some further refinements to the curriculum this year. These changes have been introduced smoothly so

that there has been no disruption to the pace at which children learn. The school, including the strong and experienced governing body, continually reviews the curriculum, as well as other aspects of its provision. It acts in the best interests of pupils, and with the aim of sustaining the school's high level of performance. Staff feel very well supported. They like working at the school and feel that their well-being is considered.

Communication and language are a central theme of the curriculum throughout the school, including in the early years. This helps pupils gain the skills and knowledge they need to be able to access the rest of the curriculum, which is broad and deep. All pupils have lessons in a wide range of subjects. These include art, music and the humanities, as well as core subjects such as literacy, mathematics and science. All subjects are tailored to the needs of the pupils. Teachers make additional expert adaptations to the curriculum for each of the pupils in their class. Pupils learn phonics at an appropriate level to their ability. The curriculum instils a love of reading through stories and by preparing pupils for phonics through sound recognition, rhymes and songs. In the early years, pupils have access to a wide range of activities to support their social, communication and wider development through play and exploration.

There is a clear assessment system in place at the school. This checks that pupils are progressing through the curriculum and that they are continually moving towards the long-term goals in their education, health and care (EHC) plan. The multi-agency team of therapists who work at the school make an important positive contribution, and their advice is incorporated into the curriculum. They work collaboratively with leaders and teachers to ensure pupils make the best possible progress.

The school's provision for personal development is highly developed. Pupils have a rich and varied experience of the arts, sport and culture, including trips to the nearby 'Young V&A Museum', the many local waterways and green spaces, disability sports activities and partnerships with national orchestras. All pupils have the opportunity to go on a residential trip to an outdoor centre. This is often the first time that they have stayed away from home. Pupils learn about safe and healthy relationships, a range of religions and cultures, and about the way that different people live their lives. Diversity is celebrated and valued at the school. The care and pastoral support for pupils are exemplary.

Pupils like to come to school regularly. Many pupils at the school have complex health needs and may not be able to attend as often as they would like. However, the school is rigorous in keeping any absences from school to a minimum and in helping pupils catch up with any missed learning.

The behaviour of pupils is exemplary. The curriculum teaches pupils the important social and emotional skills that they need to be able to work and play alongside other pupils, and to prepare them for the future. This work starts at the earliest stage, including in the early years, when most pupils join the school. Pupils continue to build their resilience and independence as they progress through the school. The curriculum is having a strong impact and prepares pupils extremely well for the next stage of their education.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Background

Until September 2024, on a graded (section 5) inspection we gave schools an overall effectiveness grade, in addition to the key and provision judgements. Overall effectiveness grades given before September 2024 will continue to be visible on school inspection reports and on Ofsted's website. From September 2024, graded inspections will not include an overall effectiveness grade. This school was, before September 2024, judged to be outstanding for its overall effectiveness.

We have now inspected the school to determine whether it has taken effective action to maintain the standards identified at that previous inspection. This is called an ungraded inspection, and it is carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. We do not give graded judgements on an ungraded inspection. However, if we find evidence that a school's work has improved significantly or that it may not be as strong as it was at the last inspection, then the next inspection will be a graded inspection. A graded inspection is carried out under section 5 of the Act. Usually this is within one to two years of the date of the ungraded inspection. If we have serious concerns about safeguarding, behaviour or the quality of education, we will deem the ungraded inspection a graded inspection immediately.

This is the third ungraded inspection since we judged the school to be outstanding for overall effectiveness in March 2013.

How can I feed back my views?

You can use [Ofsted Parent View](#) to give Ofsted your opinion on your child's school, or to find out what other parents and carers think. We use information from Ofsted Parent View when deciding which schools to inspect, when to inspect them and as part of their inspection.

The Department for Education has further [guidance](#) on how to complain about a school.

Further information

You can search for [published performance information](#) about the school.

In the report, '[disadvantaged pupils](#)' is used to mean pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND); pupils who meet the [definition of children in need of help and protection](#); pupils receiving statutory local authority support from a social worker; and pupils who otherwise meet the criteria used for deciding the school's [pupil premium funding](#) (this includes pupils claiming free school meals at any point in the last six years,

looked after children (children in local authority care) and/or children who left care through adoption or another formal route).

School details

Unique reference number	131023
Local authority	Tower Hamlets
Inspection number	10345866
Type of school	Special
School category	Community special
Age range of pupils	2 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	96
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governing body	Susy Gilvin
Headteacher	Gail Weir
Website	www.stephenhawking.towerhamlets.sch.uk
Dates of previous inspection	1 and 2 October 2019, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- Stephen Hawking School caters for pupils with complex special educational needs and/or disabilities. All pupils have significant cognition and learning difficulties. Most pupils also have other needs as well, including physical and/or sensory difficulties. All pupils have an EHC plan, or they are being assessed for an EHC plan.
- The school operates on two sites. Early Years and Year 1 are at St Jude's Road, London E2 9RL. All other year groups are at Brunton Place, London E14 7LL.
- The school has provision for two-year-old children.
- The school does not use any alternative provision.

Information about this inspection

- Inspections are a point-in-time evaluation about the quality of a school's education provision.
- Inspectors discussed any continued impact of the pandemic with the school and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.

- Inspectors met with the headteacher, the deputy headteacher and other senior and middle leaders.
- Inspectors met with the chair of governors and other members of the governing body. They also met with a representative of the local authority.
- Inspectors visited a sample of lessons, spoke to some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work.
- To evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding, the inspectors: reviewed the single central record; took account of the views of leaders, staff and pupils; and considered the extent to which the school has created an open and positive culture around safeguarding that puts pupils' interests first.

Inspection team

Gary Pocock, lead inspector

Ofsted Inspector

David Lloyd

Ofsted Inspector

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