

# TreeHouse School

## Inspection report

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	135534
<b>Local Authority</b>	Haringey
<b>Inspection number</b>	331628
<b>Inspection dates</b>	8–9 December 2009
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	Charles Hackett

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

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<b>Type of school</b>	Special
<b>School category</b>	Non-maintained special
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	5–19
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
Gender of pupils in the sixth form	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	76
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	5
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The proprietor
<b>Chair</b>	Dr Rowie Shaw
<b>Head of school</b>	Julie O'Sullivan
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	n/a
<b>School address</b>	Woodside Avenue Muswell Hill London N10 3JA
<b>Telephone number</b>	020 8815 5424
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<b>Email address</b>	reception@treehouse.org.uk

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<b>Age group</b>	5–19
<b>Inspection date(s)</b>	8–9 December 2009
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## Introduction

This inspection was carried out by two additional inspectors. Inspectors visited 10 lessons, and held meetings with governors and staff. They observed pupils in different situations, and looked at teachers' planning, pupils' log books, minutes of governors meetings, data on pupils' achievements and school policies.

The inspection team reviewed many aspects of the school's work. It looked in detail at the following:

- the evidence of pupils' learning and progress in a range of subjects
- whether the curriculum and care provide equality of opportunity and eliminate discrimination
- the quality of leadership and management and if the restructuring of the senior team had an impact
- the strengths of teaching and how effective it is in enhancing the learning of all individuals and groups of pupils.

## Information about the school

TreeHouse caters for pupils with autistic spectrum disorders. Almost all pupils have challenging behaviour and severe learning difficulties. A few have moderate learning difficulties. Many also have communication, sensory and other challenges associated with autism. Pupils come from 14 London boroughs and two local authorities from outside London. Approximately 45% of pupils are White British with other pupils coming from a range of different ethnic backgrounds. About 20% of pupils come from homes where English is not the first language. The school has moved into its current purpose-built accommodation over the last year.

The school bases its work on the principles of Applied Behavioural Analysis (ABA). To support this it employs staff in a range of positions. These include supervisors, consultants and trainees. Within the report all these staff are referred to as ABA support staff. They also employ Speech and Language and Occupational Therapists.

The sixth form was started with the current group of five students at the start of the present term in September 2009.

**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?**

**2**

**The school's capacity for sustained improvement**

**2**

## Main findings

TreeHouse is a good school where pupils receive excellent levels of care, support and guidance. An important strength of the school is the very effective way school staff work together and with other professionals. This means that pupils' education, care and health needs are addressed together in a consistent manner. Great care is taken to understand each individual pupil and provide specialist support based on a clear understanding of their specific needs. Throughout each day observations of pupils are recorded by staff and the information gained from this used to establish individual programmes. These are then regularly reviewed and amended as necessary. These programmes include targets designed to improve pupils' ability to be independent learners and take control of their behaviour.

Pupils' achievements are good. This is because their learning and progress throughout each day are good. In the classroom, pupils enjoy success in both one-to-one sessions and in the group lessons that occur at different intervals during each day. Observations of pupils clearly demonstrate that pupils gain in confidence and awareness of what they can do for themselves. Pupils respond well to staff directions and are improving their listening skills. For example, in an end-of-day Year 4 group session pupils carefully followed the guidance of the ABA support staff member leading the session, which resulted in all leaving either waving or saying goodbye to each other. There is extensive data on pupils' achievements but this is not sufficiently analysed for the school to be confident that all groups of pupils are making similarly good levels of progress in all subjects.

Behaviour is good and this contributes to the calm atmosphere in school. Pupils' disorders mean that mixing with others is a challenge but pupils learn to tolerate the proximity of others well. At breaktimes, pupils very happily 'do their own things' within larger group settings. With the encouragement of staff some are starting to play on apparatus together.

Safety procedures are very rigorous and ensure that pupils are safe at all times. This means that pupils can move freely around the site, some with assistance while a few can do so without direct supervision. While it is difficult for pupils to make decisions for themselves about their involvement in the community, good opportunities exist for them to experience visits to the facilities of the local community and these are used well to prepare pupils for the transitions they will face later in life. They are also used well in allowing pupils to demonstrate in different settings the skills they have gained in school.

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The quality of teaching is good and leads to the good progress pupils make. Thorough planning gives a good focus to individual ability levels. Staff work well as a team and this contributes to pupils staying on task and working hard. They know that doing this can result in 'reward time' and this is managed well. While extensive recording is completed on pupils' responses, on occasions insufficient attention is given to recording how well pupils are achieving in relation to increasing their knowledge or skills in the topic or activity they are doing. For example, in an otherwise excellent badminton lesson, detailed recording was undertaken about pupils' behaviour and responses to instructions, but the assessment of how well pupils were striking a shuttlecock was far more limited.

The curriculum is very well planned. It is personalised for each pupil and allows for the principles of ABA to be followed in the teaching and learning of a range of subjects. Older pupils can achieve some external certificates and further opportunities for pupils' achievements to be accredited are being developed. This is particularly so in the new sixth form where students are able to concentrate on areas that interest them and work towards achieving specific accreditation in them.

This school is well led and managed by a very committed head of school and a strong senior team. Effective leadership and management have helped the school develop from its creation a few years ago with just four pupils to its present status. The school has acknowledged the need to restructure the senior team to recognise that TreeHouse is now a bigger organisation. This has led to improved management and communication systems and a clear understanding of the school's strengths and areas that need further development. Governors know the school and use this knowledge well to ensure that there is a comprehensive set of policies. All of these factors clearly demonstrate that the school has good capacity to sustain and develop even further.

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

- Over the next term increase the emphasis placed on assessing pupils' progress in acquiring knowledge and/or skills in each subject.
- By the end of this academic year have systems in place to rigorously monitor and analyse the progress of all groups of pupils.

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

**2**

Pupils' good progress is confirmed by the vast majority of parents and carers in their responses to the questionnaire. 'My son has made excellent progress since joining the school' is typical of many comments made. There has been a considerable amount of data collected over the last two years on pupils' achievements but this is not used sufficiently well for staff to know all groups of pupils are making good progress. Pupils' good relationships with staff mean that they trust staff and respond positively to them. This was seen in all the one-to-one sessions observed during the

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inspection. Pupils concentrated on what staff were saying and responded accordingly. For example, a Year 11 pupil, with limited communication skills, carefully followed prompts from staff and his visual timetable to carry out each task on his schedule. This involved collecting equipment from a cupboard, sitting and completing the task, returning the equipment and ticking on his sheet that he had completed the task. This he did independently from the ABA support member who was supervising him.

Pupils' good progress in becoming more independent is contributing to the judgement that they make good progress in relation to their future economic well-being. They learn to make choices and this leads to them stating preferences for the activities they wish to do. This in turn is enhancing the quality of their lives and means that they are contributing to the activities that take place within their community. Although articulating they are happy is challenging for most pupils, their responses throughout each day, in classrooms, having lunch and outside at breaktimes confirm they like being at school. Pupils' good attendance supports this view.

Their disorders often mean that they have rigid views on what food they will try. Pupils, though, are responding to support and are starting to try different types of foods and, in a few cases, different coloured food. Some show their understanding that they know this is good by making sure staff know they have tried something different like a piece of fruit. The fact that many join in with different sporting activities further enhances their development of healthy lifestyles.

Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is given a high priority. The excellent improvements to pupils' behaviour and their ability to respond appropriately to different social situations are testament to this. Pupils are learning to recognise and acknowledge others and appreciate praise when they have achieved success.

*These are the grades for pupils' outcomes*

<b>Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning</b>	<b>2</b>
Taking into account:	*
Pupils' attainment	
The quality of pupils' learning and their progress	2
The quality of learning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress	2
<b>The extent to which pupils feel safe</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>Pupils' behaviour</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The extent to which pupils develop workplace and other skills that will</b>	<b>2</b>

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<b>contribute to their future economic well-being</b>	
Taking into account: Pupils' attendance	2
<b>The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development</b>	<b>2</b>

### How effective is the provision?

In all lessons observed, the quality of teaching was good and the management of the pupils excellent. Staff know the pupils well and use this well to plan challenging personalised programmes. This means that many of the lessons observed involved four or five pupils in a class working individually with ABA support staff. In all of these sessions, staff were very clear about the programmes being followed and what were the objectives of the sessions. Each was carefully structured and featured positive reward at regular intervals.

Pupils themselves are involved in choosing their rewards, which can vary from having a particular toy to play with to having time on a piece of apparatus. Instructions are clear and always given in a calm manner, making sure that pupils are not anxious about what they are being asked to do. Just occasionally, though, the assessments taken in a lesson are based more on how the pupil has responded and not sufficiently on how the pupil has progressed in knowledge and/or skills in the topic or activity being completed.

The personalised curriculum offered to each pupil ensures that they can follow a wide range of activities, although the opportunities for pupils to achieve external accreditation are still being developed. It features a core curriculum based around literacy, communication, numeracy and personal, social and health education as well as a wider curriculum that includes aspects of interest to pupils. There is a good emphasis on pupils mastering specific skills and then being able to use them in different situations. Visits and visitors add to the experiences and support pupils' spiritual and cultural development well.

The excellent quality of care, support and guidance is fully acknowledged by parents and carers. The real strength of the school is the way support is geared specifically to each pupil. All specialists, either in education, care or health, work together to ensure the best possible support packages are in place. These are regularly reviewed and changes made when needed. This level of support is backed up by excellent safeguarding procedures that ensure all pupils are safe and secure in school and given exceptional levels of care and attention.

*These are the grades for the quality of provision*

<b>The quality of teaching</b>	<b>2</b>
Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	2
<b>The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships</b>	<b>2</b>

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**The effectiveness of care, guidance and support**

**1**

## How effective are leadership and management?

Positive leadership and management have ensured that the school has developed into a highly effective provision. The focus on using a specialist strategy as the means of supporting each pupil has resulted in the establishment of a highly structured school day where the work of staff is consistent and monitored carefully. This is resulting in the good levels of progress the pupils are making. Teaching and learning are managed effectively with a good balance between adapting the principles of ABA and providing a wide range of learning experiences.

The head of school and her senior team will not allow the school to rest on its laurels and are constantly seeking to bring about improvements. Good self-evaluation has led to the production of an appropriate school development plan. This clearly demonstrates that the school has the capacity to sustain its present effectiveness and develop even further.

Equality of opportunity is given a high priority and although each pupil has an individual programme, all pupils have equal opportunities to succeed. Good data are recorded on pupils' achievements but these are not analysed enough for the school to know all groups of pupils achieve equally well. Community cohesion is a real challenge for the school but a good start has been made in introducing pupils to the community and extending their experiences of different cultures.

Good systems are in place to form effective partnerships with parents and carers. Information provided for them is excellent and they have plenty of opportunities to liaise with school staff over their children's programmes.

At TreeHouse, a non-maintained school, the relationship between governors and trustees of the charity is excellent and ensures there is clear demarcation in the roles and responsibilities of both groups. The governing body, led by a very experienced and enthusiastic chair, plays a very prominent part in the management of the school and ensures that it meets all statutory responsibilities.

*These are the grades for leadership and management*

<b>The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement</b>	<b>2</b>
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	2
<b>The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being</b>	<b>2</b>



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<b>The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money</b>	<b>2</b>

## Sixth form

The new sixth form is being developed well. Managed by the senior staff team, it is providing students with a good range of age-appropriate experiences. A good emphasis is being placed on developing students' interests. For example, one boy has shown an interest in both sport and horticulture. As a result, his timetable gives him frequent opportunities in both aspects, including time at a sports centre and working on an allotment. Those students who have not tried any new experiences are provided with taster sessions of a few different activities, where staff carefully monitor responses to see if an interest can be supported and developed in one or more of them.

Students' progress is monitored carefully following similar systems to the main school and indications at this early stage of the year show that students' progress continues to be good.

*These are the grades for the sixth form*

<b>Overall effectiveness of the sixth form</b>	<b>2</b>
Taking into account:	2
Outcomes for students in the sixth form	2
The quality of provision in the sixth form	2
Leadership and management of the sixth form	2

## Views of parents and carers

- The overwhelming response of parents and carers is that TreeHouse is at least a good school. At least 90% of parents and carers responded positively to all the questions on the questionnaire. Many express their appreciation of the work of staff, stating how their children have previously failed in other special school settings but are now thriving at TreeHouse. 'Since moving to TreeHouse my son has been happier, more content and secure' is typical of the many complimentary comments made.
- Five out of 48 responses expressed concern about their children's progress. This is not supported by evidence gained from the inspection which indicates that pupils make at least good progress with some making outstanding progress.

## Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at TreeHouse School 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 48 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 76 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	36	75	10	21	0	0	1	2
The school keeps my child safe	38	79	9	19	0	0	2	4
The school informs me about my child's progress	37	77	10	21	1	2	1	2
My child is making enough progress at this school	30	63	13	27	3	6	2	4
The teaching is good at this school	37	77	9	19	1	2	1	2
The school helps me to support my child's learning	33	69	14	29	1	2	1	2
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	30	63	17	35	1	2	1	2
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)	25	52	18	38	2	4	1	2
The school meets my child's particular needs	34	71	9	19	2	4	2	4
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	34	71	11	23	2	4	1	2
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	32	67	11	23	2	4	2	4
The school is led and managed effectively	34	71	9	19	3	6	1	2
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	38	79	7	15	2	4	1	2

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 inspected between September 2007 and July 2008

Type of school	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Nursery schools	39	58	3	0
Primary schools	13	50	33	4
Secondary schools	17	40	34	9
Sixth forms	18	43	37	2
Special schools	26	54	18	2
Pupil referral units	7	55	30	7
All schools	15	49	32	5

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 were reported in The Annual Report of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills 2007/08.

Percentages are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100. Secondary school figures include those that have sixth forms, and sixth form figures include only the data specifically for sixth form inspection judgements.

## 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"><li>■ The school's capacity for sustained improvement.</li><li>■ Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils.</li><li>■ The quality of teaching.</li><li>■ The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships.</li><li>■ The effectiveness of care, guidance and support.</li></ul>
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.



11 December 2009

Dear Pupils

### **Inspection of TreeHouse, Muswell Hill, N10 3JA**

This letter is to thank you for welcoming us to TreeHouse and for taking the time from your breaks to talk to the inspectors. We really enjoyed meeting you and seeing you work and at leisure. We feel you go to a good school.

We came to find out as much as we could about your school and now we would like to tell you what we said in the report we have written. Your headteacher and teachers make your school a welcoming place. You and your parents told us that you like school and that it is a caring and happy place where you feel safe and work hard. You are respectful, polite and considerate towards each other. Your headteacher and teachers are determined to help you succeed as are your parents. So we have asked them to:

- give you clearer advice on how to improve your work so that you can achieve your very best
- monitor your progress more thoroughly.

Once again, it was very good to meet you all. We wish you and the school all the best for the future.

Keep working hard.

Best wishes

Charles Hackett  
Lead Inspector

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