

The Fountains Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	124505
Local Authority	Staffordshire
Inspection number	359680
Inspection dates	29–30 November 2010
Reporting inspector	Ruth McFarlane

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Community special
Age range of pupils	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	71
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Richard Fox
Headteacher	Melsa Buxton
Date of previous school inspection	25 June 2008
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by two additional inspectors. Inspectors observed 19 lessons or part lessons with 12 teachers or teaching assistants being seen. Meetings were held with governors and staff. The inspectors observed the school's work and talked with pupils. They looked at school documentation including teachers' planning, assessment information, safeguarding policies and samples of pupils' work. Inspectors analysed pupils' questionnaires and staff surveys and the 17 questionnaire responses received from parents and carers.

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

- How well the school ensures that secondary-age pupils in the high dependency unit are provided with the same opportunities as their peers.
- The impact that partnerships have on pupils' preparation for their futures.
- How well middle leaders contribute to the drive for improvement and enable each pupil to achieve as well as he or she can.

Information about the school

This is a smaller than average school that provides for pupils with moderate and severe learning difficulties (MLD, SLD), and profound and multiple learning difficulties (PMLD). A quarter of the school's population have additional autistic spectrum disorders (ASD) or other complex learning needs. A small group of high dependency pupils aged 12 to 19 years are also based in the school. Most pupils are of a White British background. Few are from minority ethnic groups. None is at an early stage of speaking English. The school has won several awards for its provision, including Active Mark and Active Playground Award. It also holds Healthy Schools status. The Early Years Foundation Stage comprises a very few Reception-age children who are taught within the two Key Stage 1 groups.

The school is federated with a neighbouring special high school, inspected at the same time, and a Nursery about two miles away, which was not due for inspection. The three establishments share the same executive headteacher and governing body. A new executive headteacher took up her appointment in September 2010.

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?

3

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

3

Main findings

The Fountains Primary School provides its pupils with a satisfactory education. The pupils' positive personal development results from the school's three main strengths. These are its vibrant curriculum, a supportive, caring ethos and the close relationship developed with parents and carers. As one said, reflecting the view of the majority, 'We cannot praise the school enough. Kindness, care and support are wonderful.'

Pupils throughout the school are well cared for and, as a result, they feel safe and valued and their behaviour is good. Good partnerships with local shops, farms and charities promote learning well, and those with support agencies promote pupils' well-being and underpin the good quality of care they enjoy.

Close attention is given to encouraging pupils to develop healthy lifestyles, recognised in national awards, in a lively, attractive curriculum. Well organised, imaginative experiences are matched to pupils' needs, enriched by a good range of visits and additional activities. Pupils in the high dependency unit (HDU), in a dedicated area of the school, also enjoy a well thought-out curriculum including work experience and some activities in good partnership with the federated High School. However, placement of older pupils in this primary environment, albeit in purpose-built accommodation, reduces the opportunities for interaction in an age-appropriate environment with their High School peers.

Pupils' progress in their learning is satisfactory. This is confirmed by the school's records of progress, the lessons observed and a study of work samples. Pupils' satisfactory achievement is the result of satisfactory teaching. Teaching assistants sometimes provide well directed help but often their skills are not used well enough to promote the best possible learning. In the best lessons, teachers provide exciting challenges, whatever pupils' difficulties. In other lessons, teachers are overly directive so that pupils do not have enough opportunities to learn how to find things out for themselves and tasks are unchallenging.

The executive headteacher, new this term, has lost no time in promulgating her vision for the school and this is being enthusiastically adopted and supported by governors and staff alike. However, governance is inadequate because the governing body is not involved enough in monitoring or evaluating the work of the school or in setting priorities for development. Self-evaluation is satisfactory and the result of whole staff consultation. Systems for establishing starting points and measuring progress are beginning to embed as an effective tool for accelerating learning. Middle managers' monitoring of the quality of teaching and learning has been less effective as a tool to drive pupils' progress because it has not been robust. Written feedback is not always given, and action points if identified are not always followed up. As a result, improvements have been slow to take hold. However, taking into account the invigorated teamwork that is already developing among

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staff, and the steps already taken to root progress more firmly, there is satisfactory capacity for further improvement.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Accelerate progress and improve the frequency of good and better teaching by:
 - providing more opportunities for pupils to learn to find things out for themselves
 - pitching tasks to meet different abilities within the class more precisely
 - using the skills of the teaching assistants more effectively.
 - Improve the management of teaching and learning by:
 - carrying out more rigorous monitoring throughout the school, focused on pupils' progress, with action points that are promptly followed up
 - improving liaison between the HDU and the High School so that pupils gain more experience of an age-appropriate environment and have more contact with pupils of their own age.
 - Improve governance by ensuring that all members of the governing body:
 - are directly involved in setting priorities for improvement
 - play their part in evaluating, first-hand, the work of the school.
 - Up to 40% of the schools whose overall effectiveness is judged satisfactory may receive a monitoring visit by an Ofsted inspector before their next section 5 inspection.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

3

Pupils enter with a wide range of special educational needs that for the vast majority renders their cognitive abilities low. At all ages, pupils are developing a range of appropriate skills for the future. They are learning to use computers, and they enjoy being creative in music, art and cookery.

Pupils make satisfactory progress over time and in most lessons, whatever the nature of their special needs and/or disabilities. This includes pupils with MLD, SLD, PMLD and ASD. School records show that the progress of pupils in Key Stage 2 improved to good last year. Progress is most rapid in lessons where tasks are matched precisely to each individual need. For instance, pupils in Years 1 and 2 worked in individual work stations on completely different tasks to develop their knowledge and understanding of sounds and letters and their meaning. They were totally absorbed, showing delight when they completed each small step. Pupils in the HDU also responded best when activities met their precise needs. They showed much enjoyment, for instance, in a session where tasks varied from rolling balls to each other, to following a recipe to make pizza. Pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds make similar rates of progress to other pupils.

Pupils' smiles and eagerness when they come into school in the mornings and their response to the well thought-out curriculum reveal their enjoyment of school. They understand, within their capabilities, why they feel safe and are comfortable because adults are around them who look after them. Those who are able, have the confidence to turn to an adult for help with any concerns. Pupils enjoy the daily 'Wake up, Shake up' and

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'Leap into Life' daily activity sessions. They enjoy being involved in their school community and some take responsibility as school councillors. To the full extent of their capability they engage with different communities through visits to religious buildings of various faiths and curricular experiences of communities beyond those found locally. Older pupils enjoy the partnership with the federated High School, which broadens their learning experiences by introducing them to the world outside. They gain much enjoyment from their forays into the world of work through the partnerships with local businesses. Along with their satisfactory learning and progress and their average attendance, this helps pupils prepare adequately for their future lives.

Pupils know the difference between right and wrong. They mix well and are highly supportive of each other. Development of their spiritual and cultural awareness is extended through their work in music and art.

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	3
Taking into account:	*
Pupils' attainment ¹	
The quality of pupils' learning and their progress	3
The quality of learning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress	3
The extent to which pupils feel safe	2
Pupils' behaviour	2
The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community	3
The extent to which pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	3
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attendance ¹	3
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2

¹ The grades for attainment and attendance are: 1 is high; 2 is above average; 3 is broadly average; and 4 is low

* In sixth form schools inspectors do not make a judgement about attainment in relation to expectations of the pupils' age.

How effective is the provision?

The curriculum is vibrant and responsive to the needs of pupils. It includes excellent use of sensory areas and builds systematically on pupils' prior experience. Additional activities and visits enrich pupils' experience; some devised in collaboration with other schools and

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organisations such as a sports partnership under a national scheme and local businesses that provide work experience placements for pupils in the HDU. Pupils benefit from joint activity with the federated High School, for instance, through joint staff training on communication skills that has improved teachers' interaction with pupils by using a consistent signing method in lessons.

In the best lessons, teachers' expectations are high and they set practical tasks which require pupils to solve problems and apply their skills and knowledge. Success is met with shared joy. However, in the majority of lessons, such opportunities are infrequent. Pupils are not asked to extend their skills enough as teachers prescribe the tasks. Teachers make largely accurate assessments of pupils' progress and plan their lessons to guide pupils to the next small steps of learning.

A wide range of supportive multi-agency partnerships and links support pupils' well-being and care. Pupils are well supported as they move through each class and carefully prepared for new experiences. A great many outside agencies are used to support them, for instance, therapists for the visually impaired and deaf pupils.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The quality of teaching	3
Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	3
The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships	2
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	2

How effective are leadership and management?

The new headteacher's management skills have rapidly earned her the trust and respect of all the staff, children, parents, governors and community. As a result, staff morale is high and parents and carers feel very positive about the future.

Leaders and managers have had an adequate impact on driving improvements since the last inspection although managers of the HDU, whilst orchestrating a good curriculum, provide only satisfactory links with the federated High School. Procedures for the incisive analysis of pupils' progress have improved but the data are not yet fully understood or used by staff. The role of subject leaders is developing, although their impact overall has been limited because there is inconsistency in the rigour with which checks on the quality of teaching and learning are carried out.

The governing body has had too little impact on the work of the school and has been inadequately challenging. Members do not carry out enough first-hand checking of the school's work or provide a suitable challenge to its leaders. They rely too much on information provided by the executive headteacher. Policies for safeguarding are good and implemented well. Staff and governors have clear roles and training to protect children is thorough.

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The school satisfactorily tackles discrimination and promotes equality of opportunity and the understanding of diversity for pupils and staff. The school plays a satisfactory role in the local community, especially through good links with some local businesses. However, community cohesion is only satisfactory because meaningful links with families from national and global communities are underdeveloped. Engagement with parents and carers is strong. They are regularly consulted and their views taken into account.

These are the grades for leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	3
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	3
The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met	4
The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers	2
The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	3
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	3
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	3

Early Years Foundation Stage

Children's cognitive abilities are low. Teaching is satisfactory overall and this leads to children's satisfactory progress. Work is usually individually planned. Children are broadly content and settle steadily into routines and make their progress because of the welcoming atmosphere and individual care provided. The flexible and adapted curriculum uses resources imaginatively to reach children's understanding. For instance, teachers helped children feel the vibrations of musical instruments and took them outside to experience snow. Usually, signs of progress are small but teachers are skilled in recognising them and planning next steps of learning. The learning environment is suitable for its purpose although it is not fully exploited to stimulate learning inside and out. As a result there has only been satisfactory progress since the last inspection. The staff team is adequately managed. Links with the federated Nursery are developing and transition arrangements are effective. Children's welfare is promoted well and there is a good partnership with parents and carers that supports children's learning and development.

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These are the grades for the Early Years Foundation Stage

Overall effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage	3
Taking into account:	
Outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage	3
The quality of provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage	3
The effectiveness of leadership and management of the Early Years Foundation Stage	3

Views of parents and carers

About a quarter of eligible parents and carers responded to the questionnaire, a smaller proportion than normal. All those who responded strongly support the school and all it does. Parents and carers believe that their child is happy and safe at school, that the school helps their child to be healthy and meets individual needs. They feel the school is well led and managed and listens to their views and concerns. Hardly any concern was raised. The few comments and letters received were followed up, anonymously, with the school. Inspectors judged most aspects of the school to be satisfactory, but they judged governance to be inadequate.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at The Fountains Primary 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 17 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 71 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	8	47	9	53	0	0	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	13	76	4	24	0	0	0	0
My school informs me about my child's progress	11	65	6	35	0	0	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	7	41	9	53	1	6	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	10	59	7	41	0	0	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	10	59	6	35	1	6	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	11	65	5	29	0	0	0	0
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)	7	41	5	29	0	0	1	6
The school meets my child's particular needs	12	71	5	29	0	0	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	6	35	10	59	0	0	0	0
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	11	65	6	35	0	0	0	0
The school is led and managed effectively	11	65	5	29	0	0	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	13	76	4	24	0	0	0	0

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	58	36	4	2
Primary schools	8	43	40	9
Secondary schools	10	35	42	13
Sixth forms	13	39	45	3
Special schools	33	42	20	4
Pupil referral units	18	40	29	12
All schools	11	42	38	9

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 2009 to 31 March 2010 and are the most recently published data available (see www.ofsted.gov.uk). Please note that the sample of schools inspected during the autumn and spring terms 2009/10 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. 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">■ 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.



2 December 2010

Dear Pupils

Inspection of The Fountains Primary School, Burton-on-Trent, DE13 0HB

Thank you for the warm welcome you gave the inspectors when we visited your school. We very much enjoyed talking to you. You go to a satisfactory school. This means some things are fine and others need improvement.

You told us you feel safe and appreciate the care that all adults show to you. You make satisfactory progress in your learning because you enjoy school and want to please your teachers. You develop good personal skills. You know how to live healthily and you enjoy all the physical activities. 'Wake Up Shake Up' looks fun, and so does 'Leap into Life'.

To help your school become even better, I have asked your headteacher and the governing body to make some improvements. These include:

- helping you learn to find things out for yourselves, giving some of you harder work and making sure the teaching assistants are using their skills to help you throughout the lesson
- asking those teachers with responsibility for subjects to make more checks on how well you are doing and to help the other teachers do their best
- helping the older pupils have more contact and suitable activities with pupils of their own age in the High School, in an environment that suits their age
- improving the part governors play in checking how well you are doing at school and setting priorities for improvement.

We wish all of you success in your studies and thank you once again for your help with this inspection.

Yours sincerely

Ruth McFarlane

Lead inspector

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