

# Saxon Hill School

## Inspection report

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	124520
<b>Local Authority</b>	Staffordshire
<b>Inspection number</b>	359687
<b>Inspection dates</b>	23–24 November 2010
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	Susan Lewis

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

The inspection of social care was carried out under the Care Standards Act 2000.

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<b>Type of school</b>	Special
<b>School category</b>	Community
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	3–19
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
Gender of pupils in the sixth form	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	65
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	20
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Sharon Wood
<b>Headteacher</b>	Duncan B Gorwood
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	17 June 2008
<b>School address</b>	Kings Hill Road Lichfield WS14 9DE
<b>Telephone number</b>	01543 414892
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<b>Age group</b>	3–19
<b>Inspection dates</b>	23–24 November 2010
<b>Inspection number</b>	359687

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<b>Boarding provision</b>	Saxon Hill Sleepover Club
<b>Social care Unique Reference Number</b>	SC038728
<b>Social care inspector</b>	Jackie Callaghan

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## Introduction

This inspection was carried out by two additional inspectors and a social care inspector. Inspectors visited 16 lessons and saw all teachers. Further time was spent looking at information about pupils' progress. Inspectors held meetings with governors, groups of pupils, individual parents and education and care staff. They observed the school's work and looked at the school's development plans, documentation relating to its specialist school status and its outreach work and procedures to ensure that pupils are safe. Inspectors examined eight questionnaires returned from parents and carers and 46 from pupils and staff.

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

- How has the leadership role of middle managers such as subject leaders been strengthened and how effective are they and other leaders and managers in driving forward improvement in all aspects of the school's work?
- How does the school now check on pupils' progress in all subjects and how do staff use this information to plan and teach their lessons?
- How well has the school's provision for its sixth form students adapted to the changing needs of pupils entering the school?
- How does the sleepover club contribute to pupils' learning and well-being?

## Information about the school

Saxon Hill is a small residential special school that provides education for pupils with a wide range of physical disabilities, medical and other very complex needs, including severe, profound and multiple learning difficulties. Pupils are drawn mostly from South Staffordshire. All pupils have a statement of special educational needs. The proportion of pupils known to be entitled to free school meals is very high. The very large majority are of White British heritage. The remainder are of a range of different heritages. There has been a marked increase in the number of pupils who have multiple disabilities, since the last inspection. The school provides respite and residential experiences in its 'sleepover club' for pupils aged 7-19 years. This is usually for one night per week but occasionally for up to three nights according to need. The local authority commissions the school to deliver the South Staffordshire physical disability support service (PDSS) and this supports over 50 pupils in mainstream schools. The school attained specialist status for sensory and physical needs in September 2009. The school's buildings have been extended to include a small children's centre, including integrated nursery provision. This was in the process of being registered by the governing body and was not open at the time of the inspection. One of the two assistant headteachers has been appointed to become acting headteacher in January 2011, when the current headteacher takes up another post.

**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

This is a good and rapidly improving school. It is well set up to improve further, despite the imminent departure of its headteacher. This is because, under his outstanding leadership, almost all aspects of the school's work have been transformed and staff development has been strengthened since the last inspection. Some aspects, such as the quality of care, support and guidance, pupils' overall outcomes and the residential provision are outstanding. The school and the sleepover club are a vibrant harmonious community in which everyone feels respected and valued and pupils are excited by their learning. It now has an excellent leadership team, a good governing body and strong middle managers such as subject leaders. They are all clear about what needs to be done to improve pupils' achievement in school even more and have already identified ways to do this.

Excellent pastoral support in school and in the sleepover club has a clear focus on pupils' personal and emotional well being and independence and promotes pupils' excellent understanding of how to keep safe and live healthily. The school's safeguarding systems are exemplary and, alongside the excellent way it works in partnership with others, demonstrate its determination to nurture every child towards maximal achievement, independence and wellbeing. However, not all the school's initiatives have yet had time to fully impact on pupils' achievement and progress in subjects and on the quality of teaching and learning, which are good and improving but not yet outstanding.

The school has rigorous systems for assessing and monitoring pupils' achievements and highlighting any pupil whose progress may be slowing. Similarly effective systems have also been established for checking on and developing the quality of teaching and learning. All this is helping teachers to plan their lessons and personalise the learning opportunities for pupils. However, not all staff are as skilled in checking on pupils' learning in lessons, keeping learning objectives in mind, ensuring everyone is sufficiently challenged and at adjusting what they are doing accordingly. Generally, technology and other communication aids such as sign and symbols are used very well to support pupils' independence, involvement, communication and understanding. Sometimes, however, they are not used consistently in the whole class parts of lessons to ensure everyone is fully involved. Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good overall. Pupils' understanding of life within a multi cultural society is less well developed than other aspects. This is because although the school's work to support community cohesion is extremely strong locally and within the school, its wider work, though growing, is less established.

The school's specialist school status has enabled it to develop its provision well. For example it has transformed parts of its accommodation so that it is more suitable for the complex sensory and learning needs of many of its pupils.

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

- Improve the quality of teaching and learning and raise the proportion of outstanding teaching by:
  - developing further the use of questioning and other ways in which teachers check on and extend pupils' learning in lessons
  - ensuring teachers use sign and visual symbol systems more consistently in all parts of lessons when there are pupils present who have been identified as needing this support.
- Extend further pupils' cultural understanding and the ways in which the school supports community cohesion by establishing more global and national links.

## Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

**1**

Pupils join the school with exceptionally low standards reflecting their special educational needs and for many their multiple disabilities. Although a few pupils enter with some skills closer to those of other pupils their age, the nature of pupils' needs is such that attainment as a whole in the school is unlikely ever to rise above low. The school's tracking and assessment data and inspectors' observations confirm achievement overall is good from these starting points. All achieve at least one accredited award before they leave school, either at Entry Level or through the Unit Award system. There are no differences in the achievement and progress of pupils from different groups, backgrounds or who have different learning needs. Pupils make exceptional progress in areas linked to their physical needs such as in their independence, life skills and ability to manage these needs. This is because the school works highly effectively with therapists and others to ensure they have the resources they need and because teachers understand these needs and how to challenge pupils to overcome them very well indeed. In lessons learning and progress is good and occasionally outstanding. For example, in an English lesson on Treasure Island, Key Stage 4 students demonstrated excellent understanding of the characters and were on the edge of their chairs as the plot unfolded, reading the simplified text with expression and using key words such as 'simile'. Occasionally learning in lessons is satisfactory rather than better, because not all pupils are consistently challenged and involved throughout the lesson.

Pupils are enthusiastic and active participants. Those with the most complex needs become more engaged, increasingly holding eye contact and making more active contributions to lessons and small but significant steps towards their personal care and learning targets. Systematic and integrated support through routines such as songs and music challenges the youngest children with the most complex needs to stretch, move rhythmically and listen and vocalise. Both they and their teachers respond with pleasure and pride in their achievements. Key Stage 4 and sixth form students are similarly proud of their increasing independence and excited by the ways in which they influence school life and determine their own. Although pupils' attendance is average overall, many attend remarkably well given the challenges they face in relation to their medical and physical needs. This is all reflective of their determination to do their best and 'have a go.'

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*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 <sup>1</sup>	
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>1</b>
<b>Pupils' behaviour</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>The extent to which pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being</b>	<b>2</b>
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attendance <sup>1</sup>	3
<b>The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development</b>	<b>2</b>

<sup>1</sup> 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.

## How effective is the provision?

Teaching has improved since the last inspection and is now good overall. This is because teachers have a good understanding of pupils' individual needs and now use this knowledge well in their planning. Lesson plans identify different learning objectives for each pupil, reflecting clearly pupils' targets in their individual education plans. This ensures everyone, including teaching assistants, is clear about the emphases for each child.

Occasionally teachers lose sight of these individual objectives as the lesson progresses and do not adjust the lesson further according to how the pupil is doing. Sometimes a planned activity does not obviously link to the planned objective. Most teachers are highly skilled in capturing pupils' interest and give constant feedback to pupils' as to how well they are doing. When lessons are satisfactory rather than good, they still have good features but teachers' use of different forms of communication is inconsistent. Sometimes there is not enough challenge or pace for every pupil.

A thorough review has resulted in a now good and improving curriculum highly relevant to pupils' needs. The ability grouping of pupils for subjects such as literacy and numeracy helps teachers to focus on the specific key skills they need, such as on a particular phonic skill or application of number bonds. This is backed up by many opportunities to apply these skills in the real world. Excellent partnership activities and work with specialist

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schools, allow pupils to have inclusive experiences with mainstream schools in the broader community and with pupils from other special schools. Pupils say they really enjoy these and they give them confidence as well as 'teach them lots'. Strong sporting links with other schools extend pupils' physical development and independence further.

Staff know and care for pupils extremely well and are highly responsive to pupils' personal needs, ensuring that in all intimate tasks, the dignity of pupils is maintained. There are very effective arrangements for induction into the school and transition between classes, as well into the next stages of their education and life experience. The school makes exceptionally good use of a range of external agencies within education, health and social care to meet pupils' needs, including those whose circumstances have made them vulnerable. The physical disability support service is highly valued and makes an excellent contribution to the access and inclusion of the pupils that it supports.

*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>1</b>
<b>The effectiveness of care, guidance and support</b>	<b>1</b>

## How effective are leadership and management?

The headteacher, his staff and governing body share an absolute commitment to maximising the independence, well being, learning opportunities and life chances of its pupils. The drive to bring about improvement is determined and the leadership at all levels are tenacious in identifying what else they can do to move towards excellence in all they do. Leadership of teaching and learning is good and improving, with clear systems to support staff development and accountability. Staff are enthusiastic about how much the school is helping them to reflect on their teaching and improve it further. All this has already improved outcomes overall to outstanding and achievement to good. As yet, however, these well-chosen strategies have not been applied for long enough to have had a sustained effect in bringing teaching to outstanding.

The governing body has an exceptional enthusiasm for the school and its work. It is holding the school to account effectively. The new committee structure is helping governors to play a more strategic role and they are beginning to be more proactive in shaping the vision of the school including its place within the local authority provision.

Highly effective systems and procedures which are constantly updated, ensure pupils safety and are rigorously followed by adults, who have a comprehensive awareness of safeguarding. All pupils are respected and valued and no group is discriminated against although occasionally in lessons not everyone is included as fully as they should be. The school uses its links with other educational establishments, specialist agencies and businesses extremely well, not just to extend pupils' learning opportunities but also to help these establishments understand more about the learning and access needs of people



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with physical and sensory difficulties. The school's work on community cohesion is based on very clear analysis and evaluation, and it has effective plans to develop global and national dimensions.

*These are the grades for leadership and management*

<b>The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement</b>	<b>1</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>1</b>
<b>The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being</b>	<b>1</b>
<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>

## Early Years Foundation Stage

Children are making good progress in all areas of learning and sometimes exceptional progress in relation to their personal and social development and communication. The key worker system ensures that each child has specific attention for their individual needs and targets within lessons. This means that each is challenged and progresses well, in a safe and nurturing environment, whatever their level of ability or complexity of need. The curriculum has good coverage of all areas of learning, although staff are still in the process of identifying the best way of planning, recording progress and tracking experiences in line with the new requirements. Sensitive and thoughtful adults care for children extremely well. All health and welfare requirements are met and there is access to an appropriate outdoor learning environment. Good links with parents and carers enable these to feel part of their child's experiences and allow for continuity of care and learning. The leaders of the provision are determined to improve it further and are clear about what needs to be done next.

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*These are the grades for the Early Years Foundation Stage*

<b>Overall effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage</b>	<b>2</b>
Taking into account:	
Outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
The quality of provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
The effectiveness of leadership and management of the Early Years Foundation Stage	2

## Sixth form

This is a good and improving provision. Students leave the sixth form with strong work-related skills and good independence and life skills. The development of more vocational opportunities such as construction and horticulture and the extension of the school's work-related and enterprise curriculum and work with the community is promoting these well. While praising aspects of their experience, individual students, do not always feel they have access to a course relevant to their interests or their particular needs. Students feel very well cared for and particularly value the ways in which the sleepover club and school allow them to make decisions and have their say. The good emphasis on basic skills as well as contexts in which these can be applied is also proving effective; progress in these areas has now improved to good and is accelerating. Teaching is good and personal support excellent. Arrangements for transition are very helpful, involving parents, carers and all the appropriate agencies as well as students.

*These are the grades for the sixth form*

<b>Overall effectiveness of the sixth form</b>	<b>2</b>
Taking into account:	
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

## Boarding provision

The quality of boarding continues to be truly outstanding. The national minimum standards are met, with the overwhelming majority being exceeded. The one good practice recommendation set at the last inspection has been met.

The promotion of equality and diversity is outstanding. Cultural diversity and individual identity is purposefully celebrated within the residential provision. Pupils state that they enjoy learning about others' backgrounds, traditions and beliefs.

The residential establishment is a remarkably well-managed provision which successfully contributes to the positive impact of the education, care and support pupils receive. Pupils

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say that they are always happy when they stay at sleepover club. Comments include; 'I go to sleepover club and I really love it. The staff are great and I see all my friends'.

Relationships between pupils are excellent. This is nurtured by the strategic arrangement of the boarding accommodation where young people actively choose to share a bedroom with their friends.

Pupils' health and well-being are actively promoted through established and exceptionally effective services. There is always a nurse available throughout the day based at the school's well-resourced medical centre. This partnership continues to provide systematic care and support for pupils who have very complex medical needs. Catering across the school site is of a high standard and provides pupils with a wide range of healthy and nutritious meals. Evening and breakfast meals are served in the homely environment of sleepover club. These social occasions are valued by pupils and staff alike and effectively promote the school's family values.

Pupil safety is cohesively promoted because staff listen and take appropriate actions to protect pupils from harm. As a result, all pupils feel safe and are treated with dignity and respect. Pupils say 'I feel very safe, happy and I am really well looked after. They are my second family, they really are the best'. Pupils are actively encouraged to communicate their thoughts and opinions freely. They feel at ease with each other and feel able to share. This is echoed by the whole ethos of sleepover club which encourages mutual respect and a listening culture. This provides pupils with a solid foundation to feel secure.

The residential provision successfully provides a child-centred approach to all aspects of their service delivery. Care plans and risk assessments incorporate individual expression of pupils' aspirations and are comprehensively gathered in conjunction with the pupil, their parents and other agencies. There are effective systems in place to manage inappropriate behaviour, address bullying and respond to complaints. Pupils confirm that matters are dealt with fairly. The focus of intervention is always to educate and support those involved to develop their social and life skills.

There is a meticulous quality assurance system, which involves all staff and pupils. The senior management team ensure proper scrutiny of all aspects of the pupils' care. Any shortfalls in these areas are identified and addressed. Monitoring and other similar initiatives contribute to the reports to the board of governors and help to shape the school's strategic plan.

There are efficient procedures in place to manage health and safety and reduce risks to pupils. Recruitment procedures continue to be rigorous and well documented in line with the school's recruitment and vetting procedure. The organisation and management of sleepover club is innovative. This coupled with the imaginative and dynamic staff team ensures outstanding outcomes for pupils.

**National Minimum Standards (NMS) to be met to improve social care**

- All the national minimum standards have been met.

*These are the grades for the boarding provision*

<b>The effectiveness of the boarding provision</b>	<b>1</b>
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## **Views of parents and carers**

Eight parents and carers returned questionnaires, which is a lower response than usual. In addition a few communicated directly with inspectors. The overwhelming majority were positive about all aspects of the school work. A number made additional comments praising the school, the staff and their child's progress. Some individual concerns about communication with parents and carers, progress and courses available at sixth form and behaviour were explored with the school. Inspectors found pupils' behaviour to be outstanding and pupils' progress to be good. The school is already trying to find even more effective ways of involving parents and carers and is developing more extensive sixth form provision so that everyone has smoother access to a relevant course of their choice.

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

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Saxon Hill 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 eight completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 65 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	4	50	4	50	0	0	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	7	88	1	13	0	0	0	0
My school informs me about my child's progress	4	50	3	38	0	0	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	4	50	3	38	0	0	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	6	75	2	25	0	0	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	4	50	2	25	1	13	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	4	50	3	38	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)	4	50	2	25	0	0	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	4	50	2	25	0	0	1	13
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	4	50	3	38	0	0	0	0
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	4	50	1	13	1	13	0	0
The school is led and managed effectively	4	50	2	25	2	25	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	4	50	3	38	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](http://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"><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.

**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.**



25 November 2010

Dear Pupils

**Inspection of Saxon Hill School, Lichfield, WS14 9DE**

Thank you so much for welcoming us into your school and talking with us, when we visited it recently. You told us that you really like your school and feel it is really helping you to make progress. You also like the sleepover club and all the interesting things that your teachers help you to learn about.

We think your school is good. These are some of the things we found out about it.

The teaching is good so you make good progress.

The school works extremely well with different businesses and schools to make sure you have lots of different experiences.

You behave outstandingly well and everyone gets on really well together.

The sleepover club is excellent and really helps you to become more independent.

You have an outstanding headteacher and he and the governing body and staff manage the school really well.

We have asked your headteacher and staff to do the following important things.

Make sure teachers keep checking in lessons on whether the work is too hard or too easy for you.

Make sure teachers use sign and symbols more in lessons where you need them.

Help you to learn more about people in different parts of the country and in different countries.

You can help by continuing to work hard.

Yours sincerely

Susan Lewis

Lead inspector



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