

Stanton Vale School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	113041
Local Authority	Derbyshire
Inspection number	357248
Inspection dates	5–6 October 2010
Reporting inspector	Trevor Watts

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

Type of school	Special
School category	Community special
Age range of pupils	2–19
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in the sixth form	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	79
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	12
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mrs Carole Holt
Headteacher	Mrs Jan Wells
Date of previous school inspection	11 October 2007
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by two additional inspectors. Fifteen lessons were observed, involving fourteen teachers. Meetings were held with pupils, governors and staff. Inspectors observed the school's work, and looked at documents such as curriculum and lesson plans, whole-school planning documents, a wide range of documents concerned with health and safety, records of pupils' progress and accounts of visits into the community. Twenty-eight questionnaires returned by parents and carers were analysed.

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

- The learning and progress made in developing their communication skills by different groups of pupils in lessons.
- The suitability of differentiated curriculum activities for different groups of pupils.

Information about the school

Stanton Vale School is located in Long Eaton, near Nottingham. This is an average-sized special school for pupils with severe or profound and multiple learning difficulties. Just over half of the pupils have profound and multiple learning difficulties. Most other pupils have severe learning difficulties and a few exhibit exceptionally challenging behaviours. All pupils have statements of special educational need. Almost all pupils are from White British backgrounds and almost a third are known to be eligible for a free school meal. There are equal numbers of girls and boys. Very few pupils are in the care of their local authority.

A proposed residential facility at the time of the previous report was not established. There is no extended care or registered child care as a result. Instead, there is an after school 'club' for four evenings each week. The school is a regional centre for Mobility Opportunities Via Education (MOVE), an approach used to help pupils to develop their motor skills. The school has gained the SportsMark award, Health Promoting Schools status and has joined the Equals 'Moving On' accreditation scheme.

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

Stanton Vale School provides a good education for its pupils. All groups of pupils from the Early Years Foundation Stage to the sixth form achieve well. Regardless of the degree of their learning needs, difficulties and disabilities, pupils make good progress. Pupils enjoy their learning in lessons and in outside activities and this is reflected in their excellent attendance. They behave as well as they are able to, say they feel safe in school and are happy to talk to staff if they have any problems. Situations in classes are generally secure and safe for pupils who are not able to move themselves around or express their needs verbally.

Pupils learn well because the teaching methods and the range and type of activities that are provided are appropriate to the way in which they learn. These are mostly carried out at an appropriate pace and with the level of challenge that is needed. There are occasions when some pupils may have little to do for a time because staff are engaged on other tasks. Sometimes in lessons staff do not use a range of different ways to communicate effectively with pupils. Nonetheless, the teaching is good, being based very well on accurate assessment of how well pupils are making progress, and then tailoring each lesson to the next step in learning. The activities themselves are part of a well designed curriculum that is flexible and effectively meets the needs of all individuals. It is reinforced by the outstanding programme of care, guidance and support that pupils enjoy.

Leaders and managers have an accurate understanding of the school's strengths. They have carefully analysed staffing strengths and their own roles and have drawn up detailed and appropriate plans for how some aspects of the school are to be improved. Their frequent and insightful observation of many lessons has led to well-placed support in some areas, such as where there are new staff members, or where staff have moved into new areas of responsibility.

The governing body has a positive role in the process of school improvement: since the previous inspection, members have undertaken extensive training and have taken on new responsibilities in challenging what the school is doing, and querying whether or not the direction for its future development is right. They are still developing this more active approach, including by frequent visits around the school, such as for health and safety checks and financial matters. The school's good capacity to improve further is based on the continuing improvements since the previous inspection, including the broadening curriculum for the older pupils, the newly energised governing body and the successful integration of new staff. Leaders have organised these matters well and continue to ensure that they continue to develop.

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What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Increase the effectiveness of learning in lessons by:
 - deploying staff so that pupils are always actively and purposefully occupied
 - making wider and more imaginative use of different ways of communicating with pupils.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

2

Pupils enter the school with extremely low levels of attainment, most frequently having a range of profound and multiple learning difficulties, especially if they arrive in the Early Years Foundation Stage. Nevertheless, all groups of pupils make good progress and achieve well considering their starting points and their needs and abilities. Pupils enjoy their lessons, pay attention as much as they are able to and learn well. Those with profound and multiple learning difficulties, for instance, develop their skills of recognising familiar faces, voices and instructions and increasingly respond to them in appropriate ways. Pupils who have severe learning difficulties were observed in lessons to increasingly understand the use of symbols and signs. Some were well engaged in tasks that enabled them to begin to read and write familiar words such as their own name. Pupils with extreme behavioural difficulties learn to control their outbursts more and take on board the 'Be Friendly' ethos of their learning.

Towards the top of the school the more-able students become responsible enough to join special college courses where they can gain accreditation through the Award Scheme Development and Assessment Network (ASDAN) and some enjoy work experience sessions within school. Pupils who have autistic tendencies are encouraged in lessons to look at their classmates, speak with them and do activities together. There are no significant differences in rates of progress between girls and boys. The small number of pupils who are in the care of their local authority and those from ethnic minority backgrounds also achieve well. Many pupils take on responsibilities and help each other and the community, by, for example, making snacks and drinks, joining the school council and raising funds for local and national charities. Pupils' social, moral, spiritual and cultural development is good. They learn to socialise together well and, through lessons and visits, learn about other cultures. By the time they are ready to leave the school, students gain good independence, personal, mathematics and communications skills to give them a good start in their next educational setting.

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These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	2
Taking into account:	*
Pupils' attainment ¹	
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
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	2
The extent to which pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	2
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attendance ¹	1
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 some special schools inspectors do not make a judgement about attainment in relation to expectations of the pupils' age.

How effective is the provision?

Pupils learn well because they are taught well by capable and effective staff. Lessons are very well based on careful assessments of pupils' progress so that activities are mostly well matched to pupils' latest learning needs. Teachers also give good on-going feedback to pupils about their progress. Teachers make imaginative use of a wide range of resources, including some electronic equipment, to make activities interesting and stimulating. There are times, however, when opportunities are missed to use different ways to communicate effectively with pupils, such as signing, using symbols or making deliberate eye contact and pointing. Support staff are experienced and dedicated, but sometimes they need to help with basic hygiene and personal care for pupils, and so are not available to help in parts of some lessons. This sometimes leads to pupils not having a purposeful activity to do. The atmosphere in lessons is positive, friendly and sometimes very happy, exciting or moving, such as in a music session when pupils were 'Singing the Blues'.

The curriculum's strength lies in the way the basic core of subjects and activities are adapted to be appropriate and challenging for all pupils, whether it is in communications, mathematics or mobility, for instance. Many lessons are for small groups or individuals, but where appropriate, a whole class may be learning together, perhaps making a snack,

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or singing and playing instruments. Visits to local places of interest and activity centres are complemented by other enriching activities such as a visit by African dancers and drummers, and a selection of lunch-time and evening activities.

Pupils' feelings of safety and security are well justified by the strong procedures that the school has in place for ensuring that the school is a healthy and safe environment. All of the necessary systems are solidly in place, and staff know who is responsible for what. As pupils grow through the school their move from one class or unit to another is exceptionally well managed by 'sampler lessons' and visits, sharing staff and having classmates change at the same time.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The quality of teaching	2
Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	2
The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships	2
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	1

How effective are leadership and management?

Leaders and managers are effective in their roles at all levels within the school and in the governing body. Senior managers and members of the governing body evaluate the work of the school accurately. They celebrate where developments have come to fruition and determine the best support that can be put in place to see new developments through. Leaders' commitment and drive ensure that staff work very well together. Staff are virtually unanimous in their support of the school's efforts on behalf of the pupils and their parents and carers. Although school leaders have ensured strong community spirit within the school and the local area, pupils do not yet have enough first hand opportunities to work with others from different ethnic or religious backgrounds. Staff and governors are actively working to develop links with schools that have a very different ethnic make-up to Stanton Vale School. The school supports other schools as a MOVE centre; this role is being reinforced to wider national links. International links, which have also been identified as a development area in the school's plan, are being extended and charitable projects abroad are being established.

All requirements for safeguarding were met at the time of the inspection. Rigorous checks are made to ensure that staff are suitable people to work in school and that procedures for pupils' welfare are effective. The governing body has been particularly effectively involved in health and safety matters and in the development of safety issues in the curriculum.

Ensuring equality of opportunity is at the heart of the school's ethos, and careful monitoring is carried out so that individual needs are identified and particularly well met through the very broad range of curricular activities. Despite some occasional shortcomings in provision, such as missed opportunities for using a range of

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communication methods, any differences in the outcomes for different groups of pupils are minimal.

The school enjoys a great many very positive relationships with outside organisations. These range from a wealth of health, therapy and nursing agencies to various other schools and colleges. These are not all 'one way': a nearby school has students placed here for work experience placements, study courses and for 'apprenticeships' helping in the evening activities club.

These are the grades for leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	2
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	2
The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met	2
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	1
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	2

Early Years Foundation Stage

This Early Years Foundation unit admits children of Nursery and Reception age. They enter and leave the unit with skill levels that are measured at the lower end of the 'P scale', a scale designed to measure learning below level 1 of the National Curriculum. Children make good progress in this unit, enjoy their activities and begin to relate to each other and to staff. The unit is well managed, led and organised. Staff plan their activities well so that they are often imaginative and linked to a theme. Activities are greatly enjoyed by the children, who progress well in very basic skills. Their progress is well assessed and recorded so that planning can ensure the right level of challenge for future lessons. The resources are good, whether in the form of a quiet sensory room, small equipment and toys or the outside activity area. Children are very well cared for. There are positive and fruitful relations with parents, carers and many support agencies from outside the school.

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These are the grades for the Early Years Foundation Stage

Overall effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
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

The sixth form owes its success to its flexibility. Students move from one group to another for different activities that are suitable for them. This may, for instance, be for a choice of options in an afternoon or a college course learning skills that will help them to be more independent. Accredited courses include 'Towards Independence' and 'New Horizon.' Teachers are skilled and have good, amicable relationships with their students. They plan their lessons well and are good at giving constant verbal or written feedback to students. Students make good progress in their personal, social, academic, practical and work-related skills. Students are often very willing to take responsibilities and are involved in the community, whether helping in school or enjoying a restaurant meal or game of bowling. The sixth form is well led as part of the 14-19 area of the school, with the curriculum being well planned to ensure good transition through these years.

These are the grades for the sixth form

Overall effectiveness of the sixth form	2
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

Views of parents and carers

Parents and carers are overwhelmingly positive about the school. When there are difficulties, they say that matters are dealt with quickly. 'This is a wonderful school,' wrote one. 'It is fantastic here,' noted another, 'it is an honour to know the staff.' A very small number of parents or carers who returned the questionnaires thought that their children had not been well prepared for the next phase of their education at one stage, but they also said that the problem had been resolved to their satisfaction. The same very positive thread runs through the questionnaire returns that the school has circulated independently in the past year. 'He has never been happier,' was typical of several comments.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Stanton Vale 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 28 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 79 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	19	68	9	32	0	0	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	19	68	9	32	0	0	0	0
My school informs me about my child's progress	18	64	9	32	1	4	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	17	63	9	33	0	0	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	17	63	9	33	0	0	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	17	63	9	33	1	4	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	19	70	8	30	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)	14	52	9	33	3	11	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	17	63	9	33	0	0	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	18	67	8	30	0	0	0	0
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	18	67	8	30	0	0	0	0
The school is led and managed effectively	17	63	10	37	1	4	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	20	71	7	25	1	4	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.



7 October 2010

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Stanton Vale School, Nottingham, NG10 3NP

I hope you remember when the inspectors visited your school recently. Thank you for talking with us, giving us your views and letting us see what you do in class.

We found that you are at a good school where you make good progress in all the different activities that you do. You get along very well together and with your teachers and the other adults who help in school. You enjoy your lessons and like to do lots of different things. We found that there are many different things for you to do, whatever you are most interested in, or are good at. You told us that you feel safe in school and would be happy to talk to adults if you had problems about anything. The people who lead and manage your school do a good job, as do the teachers and other adults in the classrooms.

You mostly find your lessons interesting and you learn well, but sometimes we saw that some of you did not have very much to do because staff were doing other things, and sometimes we thought that staff could try different ways of 'talking' with you, signing, pointing, showing symbols, using switch pads and so on - so you understand more easily. So we have asked people in school to think about these two things and see if they can make them better for you.

Yours sincerely

Trevor Watts

Lead inspector

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