

# Kemball Special School

Duke Street, Fenton, Stoke-on-Trent, ST4 3NR

## Inspection dates

20–21 November 2012

<b>Overall effectiveness</b>	Previous inspection:	Good	2
	This inspection:	<b>Good</b>	<b>2</b>
Achievement of pupils		Good	2
Quality of teaching		Good	2
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Good	2
Leadership and management		Good	2

## Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

### This is a good school.

- It quietly goes about its work of helping students to move onwards and make the best of their lives.
- Achievement is good; students make good progress and behave well because they are nearly always well taught. Some teaching is outstanding.
- Staff are very skilled in meeting the needs of students who have the most extreme difficulties.
- Parents love this school and the way it helps them, as well as their children; they like the way it helps them to understand the tiny ways in which their children make progress each day.
- Students love coming to school and say many nice things about their experiences.
- Staff are very skilled at helping students who cannot speak to express themselves. This helps these students to make choices and to let adults know if they are uncomfortable or worried.
- Students get on well with each other and with staff; this helps to create a happy safe and calm atmosphere.
- Teaching and achievement keep on improving because the school is well led and managed. Good, new staff appointments have refreshed the school.

### It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Some of the most able pupils are not given hard enough work even though ambitious targets are set for them.
- Some improvement targets for teachers do not focus strongly enough on developing better ways to help students to learn.
- The governing body is not fully up to strength and is top-heavy with staff and parents.

## Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed seven lessons, they saw all teachers and all classes.
- Meetings were held with governors and senior staff; a telephone conversation was held with a representative of the local authority.
- Many informal discussions were held with staff and students.
- No information was available about responses to the on-line questionnaire (Parent View) but inspectors took account of the views of a few visiting parents, a letter submitted by another and responses to the school's own questionnaire.
- Inspectors looked at students' work and data about their past and current progress.
- Documents relating to behaviour, safeguarding, attendance and school improvement and self-evaluation were looked at.

## Inspection team

Alastair Younger, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Linda Clare

Additional Inspector

## Full report

### Information about this school

- Kemball admits students with a wide range of special needs. These vary from profound and complex, to moderate learning difficulties. Many students have additional complications including medical and physical needs, some of them life limiting. There has been a recent influx of students with moderate learning difficulties, often with additional emotional problems.
- Students can join the school at any age; those with profound and severe difficulties often join when they are very young but those with more moderate learning difficulties often join the school in Years 5, 6 and 7.
- About a half of students are known to be eligible for pupil premium funding (extra money provided to schools by the government for students being looked after and those known to be eligible for free school meals); this is well above the national average.
- There are about twice as many boys as girls; most students are of White British heritage.
- A new deputy headteacher has been appointed since the last inspection and there are some new teachers.
- The school provides guidance for many mainstream schools to help their staff develop the skills they need to meet the needs of children with learning difficulties.
- The school is due to move in September 2013, to newly built premises on the same site as a secondary academy school.

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

- Improve teaching by:
  - making sure that higher attaining students are always set hard enough work and achieve the ambitious targets they are set in planning
  - identifying at the planning stage what can be done to help these higher attaining pupils to do a bit more work with a bit less help.
- Improve leadership and management by:
  - making sure that the individual targets contained in teachers' plans for self-improvement focus more strongly on developing better ways of helping students to learn
  - making sure that a vacancy in the governing body is filled as soon as possible, then moving quickly to sort out the situation where all but three governors are either parents or staff
  - taking more care to check the effectiveness of pupil premium spending.

## Inspection judgements

### The achievement of pupils is good

- On admission, attainment is always low. At its lowest it reflects a level of learning and development more usually seen in children between birth and three months. At its highest, such as amongst a few of the newly admitted students with moderate learning difficulties, it sometimes approaches the level of an average six year old.
- From these starting points nearly all students make good progress. The few that do not are those who have deteriorating conditions that involve long or frequent periods out of school for hospitalisation or respite. On leaving, the most able pupils gain awards that represent their readiness to move on to a more adult-orientated setting. Last year, these were all students with severe or profound learning difficulties because those with moderate ones have not yet reached leaving age.
- The lowest attaining students make important but barely noticeable progress. Over 10 or so years this can amount to learning how to make a gesture to communicate need or to indicate a choice. Staff working with these students are especially well skilled in noticing these minute learning steps then building on them to help students achieve a bit more control over their dignity and destiny.
- Students with very little ability to speak are helped to learn how to communicate through the use of pictures, symbols and signing; some operate switches or use other technology to make responses. More-able students often speak in short phrases or sentences.
- There are no obvious differences in the achievement of different groups of students, be they boys, girls, minority ethnic or those being supported by pupil premium funding.
- In all the lessons seen pupils were making good or, occasionally outstanding, progress. This usually reflected a good balance between learning and personal development. This was seen to best effect in an outstanding lesson where students learned what they could buy with their pocket money whilst also learning the importance of queuing sensibly and waiting their turn. This subtly combined the ability to do sums with the development of important social skills.
- The work of the outreach team is helping increasing numbers of students to experience occasional lessons in other schools, helping them to make new friends and join in with activities they might otherwise not experience.
- Improving students' physical development has been high on the agenda over the past year or so. Spearheading this has been the excellent promotion of 'rebound' therapy, where a trampoline is used to provide opportunities for students with the most profound difficulties to experience movement, exercise and enjoyment.

### The quality of teaching is good

- Large classroom teams are well managed by teachers to help students make good progress whilst ensuring that their personal and physical needs are well met. There is a good understanding between individuals as to what their main role is and how they can help others if time allows.
- Activities are outstandingly well planned to ensure that they capture the attention of students and meet their needs. Tasks are carefully matched to make sure that students are given work that will get the best out of them and builds on what they have learned in earlier lessons. The problem is that sometimes staff do not make sure that higher attaining students are meeting the expectations that have been included in planning. This explains the mismatch between the quality of teaching and that of planning.
- Staff are skilled in using all sorts of aids to help students to communicate and take a full part in lessons. They make sure that all students are treated equally and make sure that extra or specialist resources are made available to help all students to learn and thrive. These include, for

instance, amplification systems to help students with hearing difficulties.

- Teachers usually encourage students to try to do as much work as possible for themselves. Staff who are more used to teaching students with a greater degree of learning difficulty sometimes misjudge when the more able could be expected to do a bit more without staff support.
- Parents are particularly grateful for the way in which teachers let them know how well their children are getting on in school. The parents of students who cannot speak particularly like the way that teachers send them photographs of what their children have been doing each day so that when their children come home they can share experiences and celebrate.
- Teachers have got a lot better at gathering accurate information about students' progress. Their assessments are carefully checked to make sure that the information they produce is a reliable guide as to what they can expect from students in the future.
- All staff help to instil in students the importance of developing good social skills and behaving well. They encourage celebration of achievement and gracious tolerance of lack of it. They successfully help students to become acquainted with the ways in which other people live.

### **The behaviour and safety of pupils are good**

- Students nearly always behave well. They take pride in doing so. They are polite to visitors and are healthily inquisitive about what these people are doing in their school.
- Behaviour in lessons is especially good. It hardly ever interferes with learning. There are occasional moments of personal crisis that can be unsettling but students are very well managed to make sure others do not become worried.
- When talking to a small group of students they were clearly aware of the difference between students making loud or alarming noises and those who are naughty. They say that bullying 'just doesn't happen'. In the same conversation some betrayed an element of laziness when they said their favourite subjects were the ones where they were required to work least hard.
- Students feel safe and parents express total confidence in the school to make sure that this is always the case. Good procedures ensure that staff understand the potential risk of every situation, including any risk that an individual could pose either to themselves or to others. Exceptional care is taken to ensure the safety of those students who are unable to understand how to do this for themselves.
- Medication, and procedures related to its use, are very carefully monitored and controlled. Many staff are specially trained, for instance, when students have to be fed through tubes.
- The school does not exclude students and there are no recorded instances of bullying, racism, sexism or harassment in recent years.
- Most students attend well and there are nearly always good reasons when they do not. The school follows up absence very carefully.
- A few, especially among the more able, show insufficient inclination to do a bit more for themselves. They are happy to do what is asked of them and happy to accept help with it but they tend not to push themselves to achieve a little bit more and sometimes teachers do not press them to do so.

### **The leadership and management are good**

- The headteacher leads and manages the school very well. She embodies the school's determination to make student's lives better. Other senior staff, often relatively new to their positions, are showing a high degree of perceptiveness and ambition to make sure the school improves at an increasingly rapid pace. New staff are quickly introduced to the school's way of doing things and those who are newly qualified teachers are skilfully mentored to help them build on their initial training.

- A good improvement plan focuses well on improving the quality of teaching and raising achievement. Links between the plan and the people responsible for making it work are not sufficiently carried over into the specific targets set to improve their performance. Staff turnover has resulted in the appointment of some keen and effective new teachers. These teachers are paid considerably less than the ones they have replaced. The school continues to improve with considerably lower staffing costs.
- Teachers lead and manage their classroom teams well. This is very important when these teams are usually the equivalent in size as would be found in a smallish primary school.
- A lot of thought has been given as to how to make a successful move into new premises. Leaders and managers are also working keenly and effectively to identify the broadening of opportunities for higher attaining students as they get older.
- The local authority supports the school well. Any change in the level of support is unlikely because the school cannot afford to buy it and the local authority cannot afford to provide it for free.
- **The governance of the school:**
  - The governing body has a vacancy for an additional local authority representative. It is highly supportive of the school. This can be expected when two thirds of its members are either staff or parents. In some situations the governing body can find itself in a situation where the number of governors without a vested interest in an issue might not be enough to pass a vote on the issue. Governors have been influential in helping the school to move forward. They have been involved in negotiating plans for the new school. Most importantly though they have played a significant role in appointing some inspired new staff and reinvigorating the school's leadership team. Governors are clear about how they want the pupil premium funding to be spent but the effectiveness of this expenditure has not been evaluated.

## What inspection judgements mean

School		
Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	An outstanding school is highly effective in delivering outcomes that provide exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs. This ensures that pupils are very well equipped for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 2	Good	A good school is effective in delivering outcomes that provide well for all its pupils' needs. Pupils are well prepared for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 3	Requires improvement	A school that requires improvement is not yet a good school, but it is not inadequate. This school will receive a full inspection within 24 months from the date of this inspection.
Grade 4	Inadequate	<p>A school that has serious weaknesses is inadequate overall and requires significant improvement but leadership and management are judged to be Grade 3 or better. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p> <p>A school that requires special measures is one where the school is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the school's leaders, managers or governors have not demonstrated that they have the capacity to secure the necessary improvement in the school. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p>

## School details

<b>Unique reference number</b>	124503
<b>Local authority</b>	Stoke-on-Trent
<b>Inspection number</b>	402263

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

<b>Type of school</b>	Special
<b>School category</b>	Community
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	3–16
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	63
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Hilary Gregory
<b>Headteacher</b>	Elizabeth Spooner
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	9 February 2010
<b>Telephone number</b>	01782 234879
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