

The Fountains High School

Bitham Lane, Stretton, Burton-on-Trent, DE13 0HB

Inspection dates 13–14 February 2013

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Satisfactory	3
	This inspection:	Good	2
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.

- Students make good progress from low starting points.
- Students gain a wide range of accredited learning qualifications including GCSEs.
- Staff carefully consider how students can best extend their learning, providing a wide range of courses.
- Students achieve well due to good and occasionally excellent teaching. In the best lessons students are challenged in their thinking and are very articulate in expressing their views and solving problems.
- Students' behaviour is particularly well managed by staff and colleagues from health and social care. They make impressive improvements in their conduct, and personal and social skills, due to this skilled support.
- The federation with the Fountains Primary Special School has enabled leaders and managers to work together to bring about marked improvements since the last inspection.
- The governing body, which is responsible for both schools, knows the school well and has supported it well in making good improvements since the last inspection.
- The sixth form is good. It offers students good opportunities for work-related and independent learning. Students are proud of their achievements and well prepared for later life.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- There is not enough outstanding teaching to promote excellent progress in all subjects.
- The targets set for individual students and the comments in marking do not always show them clearly how to improve their work.
- Students are not given enough opportunities to develop the skills to solve problems and investigate learning independently.
- Teachers do not have a consistent approach to developing reading skills in different subjects.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed teaching in most classes. They observed 14 lessons, including four that were seen together with the senior leadership team.
- They held discussions with governors, the headteacher, senior leaders, parents, students and the family support worker.
- Inspectors checked a range of documents including governors’ records of meetings, the school improvement plan and students’ workbooks and folders, and listened to students read.
- The views of parents were gathered through discussions and surveys, including the online Parent View.
- Joint meetings were held with governors, the senior leadership team and the lead inspector of the primary school to discuss the impact of federation on the two schools.

Inspection team

Rosemary Mackenzie, Lead inspector	Additional Inspector
Alan Jones	Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- Fountains High School is larger than the average special school and provides for a wide range of needs. Approximately half the students have moderate learning difficulties, a quarter have autistic spectrum disorders and one fifth have severe and complex learning needs.
- The school is federated with the feeder primary special school and is part of a local schools cooperative trust, which includes seven primary schools and a secondary school.
- There is one governing body and an executive headteacher for the two schools.
- Classes are organised by age and ability, with some further streaming of groups. Students who have severe learning difficulties or autism are generally educated together.
- There are more boys than girls, which is typical for this type of school. Almost all pupils are from a White British background, and speak English as their first language.
- A higher than average proportion of students are supported by the pupil premium, which is additional government funding to support certain groups of students such as those known to be eligible for free school meals.
- The school has recently developed a specialist class for autistic students with severe behavioural needs.
- No students are currently educated through alternative provision away from the school site.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Increase the amount of outstanding teaching by ensuring that all staff:
 - take a consistent approach when marking students' work and setting targets, to help them identify clearly what they have learned and how they can improve their work further
 - give students regular opportunities to take charge of their own learning through investigations and solving problems in lessons
 - agree and adopt a consistent approach to the teaching of reading, so students develop the skills they need to read confidently in all situations.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils is good

- Students' progress has improved rapidly over the past three years. Over the last year, many students have made better than expected progress, and sometimes outstanding progress. There are no marked differences in the progress made by boys or girls, or students from different ethnic backgrounds.
- The school offers students a wide range of external accreditations and qualifications. They gain lower grades at GCSEs in English and mathematics. In science they gain good passes at grade C. Less-able students also achieve nationally recognised qualifications in basic skills and work-related courses. To give students the best chance of succeeding, the school does not enter them early for examinations.
- Students supported by initiatives funded by the pupil premium have made better than expected progress in literacy and numeracy. This includes students at risk of exclusion. The funding has provided help and guidance for students and families from the family support worker, so students are better prepared to learn when they are in school. As a result, students who are known to be eligible for free school meals are doing at least as well as other groups, and better than similar students nationally.
- Students' progress is analysed carefully and compared with that of similar students nationally. The resulting information shows that students are achieving well, and it is used well to bring about greater challenge for students' learning in lessons.
- Partnership working across the federation has enabled teachers to share assessment information and to ensure that students' achievements are accurately recorded, particularly as they move up from the primary school.
- Students achieve well in the sixth form. They were very articulate and enthusiastically engaged in one lesson seen, where they were holding a university style debate on dogs in public places.

The quality of teaching is good

- Teaching is typically good. Although there is some outstanding teaching, there is also a small amount that requires improvement.
- The senior leaders have a clear understanding of the features of outstanding teaching and learning, and are challenging and supporting staff to improve their practice. Lesson observations across both the federated schools have helped to bring about good improvements in teaching, and have enabled the best practice to be more widely shared.
- A strong training focus on staff encouraging students to be more actively involved in lessons has raised the proportion of outstanding teaching, and has helped support staff to assess students' progress and support their learning more effectively. In the best lessons, planning is sharp and students' learning is checked throughout the lesson. Individual needs are met well, so that all students are challenged. In a typically good mathematics lesson, learning was exciting, challenging and fast paced. Students were able to explore and solve problems through working together.
- Not all lessons have a strong focus on precise and constructive praise, to help students

understand and build on their achievements. Marking is inconsistent and does not always tell students what they need to achieve next.

- Where teaching requires improvement, teachers do not give students enough time to extend their thinking and learning through exploration and working together.
- Students' progress in reading has started to improve recently. Leaders recognised that the approach to the teaching of reading was inconsistent. In response, it has adopted a more systematic approach to reading across the school, and has appointed staff to support this initiative.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- The school has an excellent way of improving the behaviour of some students who have challenging behaviour through careful tracking and very effective support. There is strong evidence of improvements in behaviour over time.
- The behaviour of students who have autistic spectrum disorders improves well as the school's communication and learning methods help them to participate increasingly well in lessons.
- Students say that the school keeps them safe, and they know who to talk to if they have a problem. The good systems for teaching students about safety include a current focus on staying safe online. Students say that bullying is rare, and any incidents are very quickly addressed.
- Improvements in students' behaviour, safety, attendance and well-being have all been underpinned by the very effective contribution made by the family support worker, who works across both schools. Due to the effectiveness of this support, students' attendance is now broadly average.
- Most parents say that their child feels safe in school, and has good opportunities to develop self-confidence and independence. A few parents would like more homework and more opportunities to be involved in their child's learning. Inspectors found that the school broadly sets the right amount of homework for students.
- Students' behaviour and attitudes to learning in lessons are good. Where teaching is at its best, students are fully engrossed in their learning. However, the teaching in some lessons do not involve students enough and where this is the case, they lose interest and concentration.
- The shared methods with the federated primary special school have ensured a consistency of approaches in encouraging good behaviour, safety and support to families. They have also ensured a smooth transition for students as they move from primary to secondary school.

The leadership and management are good

- The executive headteacher and senior leaders have a clear vision for both schools. They have developed policies and procedures across both schools to bring about greater consistency, for example in accurately assessing students' progress.
- Thorough checking of teaching and learning across the schools has ensured improvements in teaching and achievement. English and mathematics are now taught by subject specialists, and

this has resulted in better progress being made by students.

- Good training is provided for all staff, and it is linked closely to improving students' learning. For example, the school reviewed the deployment of support staff and ensured that they had a better understanding of how students learn. The lessons observed show that this has paid off.
- The headteacher and senior leaders have an accurate view of the strengths and weaknesses of the school. They have clear plans for further improvements to teaching and learning, and are developing the documentation of strategic plans for the future of the schools so that all staff, governors and parents understand clearly the next steps in their development.
- The school benefits from the support of the local authority, which knows the school well and has provided advice and financial help. For example, it has provided funds for a new facility for students with severe learning and behavioural needs.
- The range of subjects and learning opportunities is wide, particularly in Key Stage 4 and the sixth form. Students are offered an impressive range of work-related qualifications, including floristry and brickwork. Staff continually seek opportunities for students to experience relevant and interesting learning opportunities.
- Students who have complex and severe learning needs follow subjects that are best suited to their abilities. This ensures they can get the most out of lessons, as they are interesting and feature a strong emphasis on active participation.
- The innovative leader of the sixth form has developed an exciting range of learning opportunities with qualifications that match students' needs well. Students concentrate on independence and work-related learning. For example, they help to run the Pit Stop café, answer the phone on their work placements and learn to use buses on their own.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - The governing body has ensured that the school has made good improvements since the last inspection, and that the shared working across both schools is effective. Governors hold the school to account well by questioning its leaders on the quality of teaching and learning, and increasingly understand what data show about students' progress. They know how the pupil premium funding has been spent, and what impact it has had on the achievement of eligible students. They are involved well in the setting of objectives for staff and have ensured that the link between pay and staff performance is closely tied. They have had suitable training to extend their knowledge of legal issues such as safeguarding, health and safety, as well as educational matters.

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

Unique reference number	124504
Local authority	Staffordshire
Inspection number	406247

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

Type of school	Special
School category	Foundation special
Age range of pupils	11–19
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in the sixth form	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	126
Of which, number on roll in sixth form	46
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	David Symons
Headteacher	Melsa Buxton
Date of previous school inspection	29 November 2010
Telephone number	01283 239161
Fax number	01283 239168
Email address	headteacher@fountains.staffs.sch.uk

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