

Stanley School

Pensby Road, Thingwall, Wirral, CH61 7UG

Inspection dates

6–7 March 2013

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Outstanding	1
	This inspection:	Good	2
Achievement of pupils		Good	2
Quality of teaching		Good	2
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Outstanding	1
Leadership and management		Outstanding	1

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school.

- Pupils arrive at school with levels of development below those typical for their age. This is because of their disabilities and special educational needs.
- Through excellent relationships established with the adults, almost all pupils overcome their difficulties. They enjoy lessons, achieve well and contribute to school life.
- Almost all make good progress in every area of the school, including the Early Years Foundation Stage. Some make outstanding progress, particularly in Key Stage 2.
- Pupils' good achievements result from the good quality of teaching. Much of the teachers' work is outstanding.
- The school performs a remarkable job in aiding pupils to overcome and manage their complex behavioural difficulties. This leads to pupils' behaviour becoming outstanding.
- From very low starting points pupils develop excellent personal and social skills on their journey throughout the school. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding.
- Pupils report, where they can, that they feel very safe in school. There is no bullying or harassment. Rates of attendance are high.
- Parents enthusiastically voice their support of the school, as does the local authority.
- The leadership and management of the school are outstanding. Managers, including the middle leaders and the governing body, know the school's strengths and weaknesses very well.
- Managers at all levels use their understanding of the school to very good effect. Their planning shows a determination to ensure pupils' achievements and the quality of teaching will become even better in the future.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Teachers do not always challenge pupils with very small steps of learning in their lessons.
- In some classes pupils make slower progress than they could because they are too often taught in whole-class groups.
- The governing body and school managers have not yet shown clearly and specifically how the pupil premium funding is used to help those entitled to the benefit.

Information about this inspection

- The inspectors observed eight lessons given by seven teachers and spent almost five hours in classrooms, occasionally accompanied by the headteacher. Pupils' reading was seen and heard during the course of their lessons and at lunchtime.
- Inspectors watched pupils arriving at school in the morning and leaving in the evening. They saw them having lunch and during their break times.
- Pupils' work was studied and the inspectors spoke with pupils informally to gain their views and opinions.
- Meetings were held with the headteacher, other members of the school management team, teachers, the business manager and a member of the governing body. A representative of the local authority met with the lead inspector.
- The views of staff were noted through meeting with them and by scrutinising their returned questionnaires.
- 12 responses to the online Parent View questionnaire were studied and four parents met with inspectors to register their views.
- The work of the school was observed and important documents concerning planning, its procedures for gaining an accurate view of its performance, safeguarding, attendance, behaviour and the progress of pupils were scrutinised.

Inspection team

Terry McKenzie, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Jane Holmes

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- This is a special school for day pupils. It admits those who have severe learning difficulties. Many experience other disabilities such as physical disabilities and autism. A significant proportion of pupils have behaviour that is difficult to manage. The school admits pupils from ages 2 to 11, and they can arrive at any time in their primary education.
- Numbers of pupils are fairly evenly distributed between the Early Years Foundation Stage, Key Stage 1 and Key Stage 2. About a quarter of pupils are girls.
- A high proportion of pupils receive the pupil premium grant, which in this school is for those known to be eligible for free school meals as well as a few in the care of the local authority.
- The great majority of pupils are of White British heritage.
- The school serves the whole of the Wirral. Some pupils travel quite long distances to attend and the local authority provides transport for most.
- Stanley School has not been inspected since 2007. Since the previous inspection significant changes have been made to staffing with the appointment of new deputy headteacher and some other managers.
- The school does not have any formal partnership arrangements with other schools, but on an occasional basis outreach support is provided to other local primary schools.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- The governing body and the senior managers of the school must show clearly how the pupil premium funding is used to support those pupils entitled to the benefit.
- School managers should provide every opportunity for pupils to make the maximum possible progress by ensuring that teachers:
 - consistently give pupils very-small-step, individual targets during lessons that can be easily measured and recorded when successfully completed
 - use a wider range of teaching and learning styles to ensure pupils do not spend so much time being taught in whole-class groups and have more opportunities to be independent in their learning.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils

is good

- The achievement of pupils is good because of the good rate of progress they make in English and mathematics and in their personal development. For some pupils, particularly in Key Stage 2, progress is outstanding. This is clearly shown in the very well-maintained records that are kept by school managers.
- Pupils' good learning results from the good teaching they receive and the excellent care provided by staff that enables them to function well in class. Pupils overcome their difficulties because the adults are highly successful in encouraging them to moderate their behaviour and take part in lessons.
- Pupils receive much help in breaking down the communication barriers they face. Very good use is made of new technology, including electronic speech. Tablet computers are available to all pupils who require them. Adults use signs and pictures very effectively to communicate. Staff often use several methods together so that different pupils can benefit at the same time.
- Throughout the school pupils make good progress in English and mathematics. School records indicate that, for the great majority, their progress is similar to those in other similar schools locally and nationally. Across the school all groups achieve equally, including boys, girls, those from minority ethnic groups, those entitled to free school meals and the very few looked after children. In addition, a significant number of pupils in Key Stage 2 make better than expected progress.
- In the Early Years Foundation Stage and in Key Stage 1 staff work hard to help pupils to recognise and overcome their learning difficulties. Much is done to enable these younger pupils to work effectively in lessons so that, from very low beginnings, the rate at which they learn increases as they go through the school. A range of methods has been devised to help those who are making less progress than they should in reading to catch up. These methods work well. The funding from the pupil premium has helped this to happen and it is clear that pupils known to be eligible for free school meals reach similar standards to other pupils. However, the school cannot show clearly how it spends the money on behalf of this specific group of pupils.
- Pupils make the best progress where teachers devise opportunities for them to have individual work. In outstanding lessons teachers set clear targets for learning that operate throughout the session so that pupils learn efficiently and quickly.

The quality of teaching

is good

- The effective work of managers and the support provided by key leaders mean that teaching is generally good and improving. Some teaching is outstanding.
- Good teaching is instrumental in helping the great majority of pupils to make good progress. Parents are extremely appreciative of the way staff help them devise ways to manage the behaviour of their children at home. Several mentioned the transformations in behaviour that have taken place. They appreciate the workshops run by the school. One said, 'The journey we have been on has been amazing.'
- Where teaching is at its best, teachers plan very thoroughly for each pupil, providing activities in lessons that enable pupils to learn quickly. In one mathematics lesson observed, for example, the teacher took great care to plan different work for each pupil. Consequently, their progress was outstanding.
- Sometimes, however, teachers miss chances to challenge pupils with individual learning tasks and they cannot always tell exactly how much progress has been made. Teachers usually provide interesting things for pupils to do and they take part readily. Pupils want to please the adults so they try hard with their work.
- Almost all teachers demonstrate outstanding aspects of their work, such as the meticulous records they keep. They organise their classrooms in a business-like way and this signals to

pupils that classrooms are for learning. Teachers make good use of the space and resources available. They use interactive whiteboards, computers and workspaces for small groups. Sometimes, individual work is provided. Rooms are largely uncluttered and much thought is given to catering for the needs of those experiencing autism and communication difficulties.

- A few lessons rely too much on group activities led by the teacher. Here, pupils have infrequent opportunities to develop their own learning and the quality of support provided by adults is limited because they are mainly concerned with helping pupils remain focused in a 'circle' or whole-class group.
- Generally, however, good teaching promotes good progress. The excellent relationships that exist between adults and pupils encourage high standards of behaviour and spiritual, moral, social and cultural development in classrooms.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are outstanding

- The school performs a remarkable job in helping pupils overcome their difficulties. This is because of the great thought given to the care of each pupil. Individual behaviour management and development plans ensure that support is provided to pupils and their parents. The regular exchange of information between home and school is welcomed by parents.
- Throughout the inspection pupils' behaviour was outstanding in almost every class, around the school, when eating meals and when playing. This is because of the effective behaviour management by staff. The headteacher's records of behaviour show that serious incidents are few. There have been no exclusions.
- From very low starting points when pupils join the school, they are helped to develop their personal and social skills. They learn to get on together and develop friendships. They trust the staff and feel confident in undertaking class work that, in the past, they would have found impossible.
- The great personal gains that pupils make, together with their outstanding spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, mean that they are very well prepared for moving on to secondary education.
- Pupils learn about right and wrong and how to relate to others beyond school. Even those with extreme difficulties have opportunities to practise their skills outside school and meet different kinds of people. They are helped to improve their understanding of the world and how to keep themselves safe.
- Many cannot learn specifically about bullying and harassment in the normal ways. For those who can, however, the personal, social and health education does much to raise their awareness of these matters. Pupils who can communicate clearly report that they feel very safe in school and there is no bullying or harassment. These views are supported by parents and by staff.
- Pupils attend regularly and attendance is very high compared with other special schools.

The leadership and management are outstanding

- Since the last inspection the headteacher has improved the school, for example by undertaking high-quality reviews with staff of their strengths and weaknesses. Consequently, the good teaching is improving and much is already outstanding. Newly introduced systems are helping teachers to plan more effectively for the individual needs of pupils and raise expectations for their learning.
- However, for some teachers these new initiatives remain at an early stage of development so that, while almost all teachers set targets for pupils, they rarely convert these into very small steps of learning. School leaders are aware that, in order to successfully complete these initiatives, there is more to be done to help teachers develop different ways of teaching so that pupils can work more on their own.
- The morale of staff is high. All are keen to provide the best for pupils. One reported, 'I am very

lucky to be part of such a fantastic team.'

- Pupils enjoy a full range of interesting activities and memorable experiences. These include lessons away from the school site and activities at lunchtimes such as a cub pack, physical activities and reading. Most older pupils undertake residential holidays organised by school.
- The outstanding curriculum ensures that all are included in school life and that none are discriminated against. The headteacher regularly examines the high-quality school information to find out about pupils' learning and ensure that all groups are making progress in all areas. These records indicate that those entitled to the pupil premium make at least good progress in English and mathematics. Staff intervene quickly if things are not as good as they should be for any pupils.
- Parents welcome the support of the school. They appreciate the work done jointly with them to support and manage behaviour. They are full of admiration for the work done in teaching their children to communicate. The quality of information presented to parents and others through the website and prospectus is of an exceptionally high standard.
- Good support provided by the local authority includes services for human resources and school improvement work. The local authority has recognised the inadequacy of the current building and has provided a new school for staff and pupils to move to very soon.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - The governing body is outstanding in its support for the school and knowledge of what it does, except for the way it supports pupils known to be eligible for free school meals. Governors regularly review school information to see how well pupils are doing. Some are very active in school, for example in helping pupils with their enterprise projects. Members have ensured that all requirements for safeguarding are in order. Governors hold the headteacher and senior staff to account by setting precise targets for school improvement. The quality of teaching is checked regularly; any underperformance is tackled and salary increases are linked to the contributions made to pupils' learning. The governing body has not worked with the headteacher to show how the pupil premium funding is used to help those entitled to the benefit.

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	105138
Local authority	Wirral
Inspection number	402968

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	2–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	93
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Dr Jane Seymour
Headteacher	Anthony Newman
Date of previous school inspection	31 October 2007
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