

Alfreton Park Community Special School

Alfreton Park, Wingfield Road, Alfreton, DE55 7AL

Inspection dates 8–9 May 2013

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

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school.

- Pupils achieve well. Most meet the targets set for them and make good progress.
- Teaching is good and pupils learn well in lessons. Staff teams work very well together.
- Staff check on pupils' progress carefully and frequently. Extra help is provided for any pupils who are falling behind.
- Senior leaders check on teaching rigorously. Effective strategies have been introduced to improve teaching and learning.
- The sixth form is good. It prepares students very well for life after school.
- Good provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage gives children a very good start to their education.
- Behaviour and safety are outstanding. Classes are calm and quiet, and pupils nearly always have excellent attitudes to learning.
- The staff manage pupils' behaviour very well. Pupils enjoy school, their attendance is above average and they say they feel safe.
- The school is well led and managed by the acting headteacher and acting deputy headteacher. Leaders throughout the school are working well to improve and develop the school while waiting for the appointment of a new headteacher.
- Relationships between staff and pupils are outstanding. Parents and carers, pupils and others are very happy with the school.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Some teaching does not include enough use of symbols or other communication aids to help pupils understand and learn.
- Pupils with profound and multiple learning difficulties do not have enough chance to be taught and learn quietly, without distraction.
- A small amount of whole-class teaching does not fully include every pupil all the time.
- The governing body does not always challenge school leaders about the information they are given.
- The governing body has not recently shared in the development of the long-term vision for the school, and many parents and carers do not understand its work.

Information about this inspection

- Ten teachers and a teaching assistant were observed teaching eleven lessons. Most of these were observed jointly with the acting headteacher or acting deputy headteacher.
- Meetings were held with the acting headteacher, acting deputy headteacher, other members of the teaching and administrative staff, and the Chair and another member of the Governing Body. Informal discussions were held with pupils and a meeting took place with a representative of the local authority.
- Inspectors reviewed many documents, including those relating to pupils' progress, school self-evaluation, school improvement, curriculum and lesson planning, governance and keeping pupils safe.
- Inspectors took account of inspection questionnaires returned by 20 members of staff together with the school's own surveys of the views of pupils, parents and carers, staff and involved professionals. There were insufficient responses to Parent View (the online questionnaire for parents) to be shown.

Inspection team

Judith Charlesworth, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Joan McPhail

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- Alfreton Park School provides for pupils with severe, profound and complex learning difficulties. The complexity of pupils' needs on entry is increasing, and pupil numbers are growing steadily.
- Around one third of the pupils have autistic spectrum disorder, often combined with other difficulties such as Down's Syndrome. Just over one third have severe learning difficulties, and most of the rest of the pupils have profound and multiple learning difficulties.
- All pupils have a statement of special educational needs.
- There are more boys than girls, which is typical of schools of this type.
- About two fifths of the pupils are eligible for the pupil premium. This is well above the national average. The pupil premium is an additional sum of money provided by the government to support the achievement of certain groups of pupils, such as those who are looked after and those known to be eligible for free school meals.
- Almost all pupils are from White British backgrounds and none speak English as an additional language.
- Children in the Early Years Foundation Stage are taught together with pupils in Year 1. Both groups follow the Early Years Foundation Stage curriculum.
- The school does not use any alternative educational provision for its secondary and sixth-form pupils.
- The school is currently led by an acting headteacher (the substantive deputy headteacher) following the headteacher's retirement at Easter 2013. A senior manager is acting as deputy headteacher. A further senior teacher is absent on long-term sick leave.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of teaching and raise pupils' achievement by:
 - widening the use of symbols and other communication aids to improve communication, understanding, teaching and learning
 - ensuring that pupils with profound and multiple learning difficulties have enough opportunities to be taught and learn in a quiet location, resourced with suitable materials and equipment
 - ensuring that each pupil's individual needs are fully met throughout whole-group teaching sessions.
- Improve governance by:
 - improving the degree of independent challenge provided to the senior leaders about the work of the school and its outcomes
 - improving the governing body's involvement in planning for the strategic development of the school
 - increasing parents' and carers' understanding of the governing body's work.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils is good

- Pupils' attainment on entry is low due to their complex needs. In all age groups, staff plan for pupils' progress carefully by setting personalised targets in each lesson and providing tasks that help pupils to achieve them. Progress towards these is carefully recorded. Class records show that most individuals meet their targets and achieve well.
- Pupils are set demanding long-term targets, based on the expectation that they will achieve more than average for their age and ability. These are moderated by pupils' individual circumstances, such as medical needs. Comparisons with national information over the last three years show that pupils generally meet, and often exceed, the expected targets at the end of each key stage.
- The school closely investigates reasons why any individual is not making expected progress. Many pupils have significant medical needs and family and social difficulties, all of which have a negative impact on their learning and well-being. The school does all it can to support such pupils, both by providing extra educational help and by supporting their families.
- Some individuals in all age groups achieve exceptionally well. Children in the Early Years Foundation Stage make rapid progress, as do those in the sixth form. In both these groups, the school's strong emphasis on teaching and supporting personal development results in increases in the young children's understanding, communication and conformity, and the young adults' increasing independence and use of initiative.
- Throughout the school, pupils achieve particularly well in personal, social and health education. They are also now achieving very well in reading due to a whole-school focus on improving the teaching of reading skills. Pupils with autistic spectrum disorder learn to manage their anxieties and behaviour, and develop skills appropriate to their ability. Those with severe learning difficulties develop their skills well; many learn to read and to write independently.
- Pupils' mathematical development is good. They learn to count and to perform various mathematical calculations, including using money and budgets as they get older. One pupil in Key Stage 4, for example, left the lead inspector a note saying how much she owed for her refreshments from 'Krusty's Snack Bar'.
- Not all pupils achieve well enough in communication, and pupils' progress in science is not as marked as in English and mathematics. Those with profound and multiple learning difficulties do not always make as much progress as they could.
- The extra money derived from the pupil premium is used effectively to provide additional staff for activities such as the after-school club and literacy and numeracy. These pupils' progress improved last year. Comparison of the achievement of different groups is of limited value because of the low numbers within each group. Nevertheless, indications are that boys and girls in all age groups, and from all backgrounds and circumstances, make similar progress.

The quality of teaching is good

- Pupils' achievement is supported very well by the outstanding team work between adults. Teaching assistants support the behaviour and learning of individual pupils very effectively. They have a good understanding of the pupils' targets and how to help them concentrate and learn.

In the most effective lessons, pupils' positive attitudes, careful listening and behaviour are exemplary.

- Senior leaders accurately identify outstanding teaching, and are working effectively to increase this proportion. In these highly effective lessons, learning targets are very well devised for pupils of different abilities, and further tailored for each individual. Resources are very well prepared and used. In a science lesson in Key Stage 2, for example, pupils were given items to match in a 'big book' about worms set up in front of the class. The higher ability pupils matched words in the text; middle ability pupils matched a very large word in the title, and the lower ability pupils matched a picture. This lesson was an excellent example of how well literacy is supported in all subjects.
- Teachers pitch questions at different levels to check on pupils' understanding and extend their responses. Pupils are given constant, specific feedback so they know exactly what they have done well, for example: 'Well done for finding the 50p.' In the best lessons, pupils are asked to tell staff how well they have understood or completed the task so that staff can note misunderstandings. This is by a simple 'thumbs up' for younger and less-able pupils or, as seen in a high quality lesson in Key Stage 4, by responding to more complex criteria, such as: 'What have you learned in this lesson?'
- Teaching in the Early Years Foundation Stage emphasises communication and language, physical development and personal, social and emotional development. The very small classroom is supplemented by free access to outdoor learning and an attractive covered area set up with additional activities. These strongly support learning and development. Records clearly show that children make good progress in gaining the skills expected of early child development.
- Teaching in the sixth form emphasises independence, the use of initiative and the development of adult social skills. For example, students are expected to learn how to budget by each having their own 'pot' of money for buying snacks or cooking ingredients when out in the community. They are actively taught suitable social skills. On one occasion, for example, a lesson was focused on negotiation between pairs. Students were told exactly how to do this, to look one another in the eye and to turn towards one another when talking. This was an exemplary lesson in terms of both the teaching and the students' attitudes.
- While teaching is typically good, not enough is outstanding and there is some practice that requires improvement. At times, pupils with profound and multiple learning difficulties do not have enough opportunity to work in a quiet place with intensive, uninterrupted support that allows the teaching of skills in very tiny steps. Pupils with very short concentration spans are sometimes expected to sit for too long and they do not have enough alternative tasks to support their learning away from the group.
- Symbols to support communication and understanding, and other communication aids, are not used widely enough. This relates both to use by the pupils and also by staff. In the most effective lessons, the teacher had prepared individual targets for pupils in symbols, so that each one knew what they were expected to achieve. On too many occasions, however, such targets were displayed in sentences that were too complicated for pupils to understand.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are outstanding

- The school's own surveys of the views of parents, carers, staff, external professionals and pupils show that all groups are happy with pupils' behaviour and its management. This was confirmed

by widespread observations and responses to the staff inspection questionnaire.

- Pupils' behaviour and attitudes to learning in class are usually excellent. Occasionally, individual pupils lose concentration when expectations are not pitched accurately enough to suit them. Generally, though, pupils very much enjoy their lessons and try hard to succeed. Their attendance is above average.
- A number of pupils have challenging behaviour associated with their difficulties. They are expertly managed by staff who do an excellent job in helping pupils to keep calm, concentrate and learn. Behaviour management programmes are devised which are consistently implemented. Records show that incidents of challenging behaviour reduce as a result.
- The school recognises that pupils' emotional and social wellbeing is central to their achievement, and has confirmed this in the appointment of a family liaison worker who provides support to families as needed. Relationships and mutual trust between staff and pupils are outstanding. Staff understand their individual needs and react appropriately if a pupil is behaving uncharacteristically.
- Pupils are friendly and sociable with one another. Some have clear friendships, for example, as seen in a 'literacy in the pool' lesson when two pupils immediately chose to play ball with one another when given free choice time. Students in the sixth form are supportive of one another, helping each other in tasks and expressing genuine pleasure at the success of others.
- Records and various surveys of pupils' and adults' views show that there are no deliberately anti-social incidents. Keeping safe, being kind and anti-bullying are frequent topics in the strong provision for personal, social and health education. Older pupils and those in the sixth form act safely in the kitchen, where they make excellent food and snacks with as much independence as possible. The emphasis on appropriate social skills and behaviour when in the community helps pupils to look after themselves when away from school. This prepares them very well for the next stage in their lives.

The leadership and management are good

- The school has benefited from good leadership and management for some years. Leaders constantly strive to provide pupils with equal opportunities for learning and future wellbeing. Parents, carers, staff, professionals and pupils are regularly consulted and are happy with the school's work. Partnerships with families are strong, and those with external organisations provide great benefits to the school, for example, in the provision of work placements for sixth formers and in renovating the school grounds.
 - The school is currently at a crossroads as the headteacher retired at Easter 2013 after a period of sharing her role with the deputy headteacher, who was then known as the associate headteacher. Arrangements to secure permanent leaders have recently stalled, but the school is currently led well by the acting headteacher and acting deputy headteacher, pending permanent appointments being made.
 - School self-evaluation is accurate. Leaders know what aspects of the school's provision need developing, and detailed plans have been set to achieve this. Much has been implemented in the past year, and plans for numerous further developments have been outlined. In response to issues raised in the previous inspection, staff have received training and improved their work with pupils with profound and multiple learning difficulties. However, current class organisation
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and building limitations mean that these are not always used to maximum benefit.

- Leadership and management responsibilities are very well spread throughout the school. Department leaders are effective; for example, provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage and sixth form are very well managed. Some support staff have managerial responsibilities which they carry out very well, such as in managing activities in the swimming pool and manual handling across the school.
 - The quality of teaching and pupils' learning are closely and effectively monitored. The senior leaders have a clear and accurate view of the school's and individual staff members' strengths and weaknesses, and how these affect learning. This information is used to improve teaching, for example, through the introduction of the 'lesson study' approach. Learning is improved by the implementation of extra support and monitoring for pupils not achieving as well as expected.
 - The school provides a rich and interesting range of activities and subjects which engage pupils of all ages. This contributes significantly to their good achievement and prepares them very well for the next steps in their lives. The school promotes their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development very effectively. This, along with the provision for pupils' personal development, are strengths of the school. Alfreton Park's international links through the Comenius project, including visits abroad to various schools such as in Poland and France, are exceptional.
 - The school benefits from the contribution of the local authority's school improvement advisers. The local authority is funding the replacement of the school's swimming pool in a building that will include an extra classroom and therapy room which will help improve the school's accommodation.
- **The governance of the school:**
- The composition of the governing body has changed over the past few months and some new members are getting to grips with their responsibilities. All statutory duties are met, including those to safeguard pupils. Finances are well controlled and administered.
 - The governing body has always been kept very well informed by wide-ranging reports from the headteacher and school staff. As a result, members understand the school's strengths and weaknesses, and its views on the quality of teaching, staffing difficulties and pupils' achievement, including those in receipt of the pupil premium. This information is used to support discussions about staff promotions, how to tackle underperformance and the allocation of extra pay for additional responsibilities and excellence. Members' knowledge is supplemented by visits to school to see its work first hand. However, senior leaders report that the governing body does not always robustly challenge them about the school's work.
 - The governing body has not recently shared in the process of developing the long-term vision for the school which hampers its view of strategic development.
 - The school's own surveys of parents' and carers' views show that nearly one third do not know enough about the governing body's work to comment on its effectiveness.
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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	113040
Local authority	Derbyshire
Inspection number	401336

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	4–19
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in the sixth form	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	76
Of which, number on roll in sixth form	17
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Francine Franklin
Headteacher	Cheryl Smart (Acting Headteacher)
Date of previous school inspection	7 July 2010
Telephone number	01773 832019
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