

Severndale School

Woodcote Way, Monkmoor, Shrewsbury, SY2 5SL

Inspection dates 12 – 13 June 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		Good	2
Leadership and management		Good	2

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school.

- All pupils achieve well in English and mathematics, and particularly well in communication and personal development.
- The achievement of students in the sixth form is outstanding. They are prepared exceptionally well for their futures.
- The youngest pupils in the Early Years Foundation Stage get off to a good start and join in happily with others.
- Pupils with moderate learning difficulties, who are based at a local secondary school, make excellent progress.
- Good quality teaching and support mean that the majority of pupils achieve at least the progress expected of them.
- Behaviour is good across the school and in the playground. This is a result of high quality behaviour management systems that are consistently applied.
- A wide range of therapies successfully support the individual physical and language needs of pupils.
- Pupils say they feel safe and their parents and carers agree.
- High quality care and support for pupils with additional special needs, including the wide range of therapies, enables them to take part fully in all activities.
- Efficient planning by the governing body means that money is spent well to benefit all groups of pupils.
- Aspirational leadership by the headteacher and senior management team has enabled the school to move forward at a fast rate.
- Leaders give high priority to providing good quality training for staff. This is a good example of their strong focus on supporting and improving the staff's skills.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- In a very few lessons, teachers spend too long talking. This slows down the rate of progress and amount of work that pupils achieve.
- Lack of sufficient access to outdoor learning means that some Nursery and Reception children cannot make enough choices about where they play and work.

Information about this inspection

- The inspectors observed 27 lessons, some jointly with the senior leaders. In addition, the inspectors made a few shorter visits to observe pupils' learning, and listened to some pupils read.
- Meetings were held with the headteacher, senior leaders and managers, other staff, members of the governing body, a local authority representative, therapists and the headteacher of the local school where pupils with moderate learning difficulties are based. Inspectors also spoke to different groups of pupils.
- The inspectors observed the work of the school and looked at a number of documents, including the school's own information about pupils' progress, planning and monitoring documents, safeguarding information and pupils' work.
- Inspectors took account of the 15 responses to the online survey (Parent View) and also to the 141 responses to the staff inspection questionnaire.

Inspection team

Denise Morris, Lead inspector	Additional Inspector
Kathleen Yates	Additional Inspector
Peter McKenzie	Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- This is a large special school which caters for pupils with a very wide range of special educational needs from across Shropshire.
- Almost all pupils have a statement of special education needs for their moderate, severe or profound and multiple learning difficulties.
- A large minority of pupils have autism spectrum disorders. Some have physical disabilities or challenging behavioural, emotional and social difficulties.
- The vast majority of pupils are White British and no pupils speak English as an additional language.
- The proportion of pupils eligible for the pupil premium (additional funding for those known to be eligible for free school meals, those looked after by the local authority and those from service families) is above average.
- The school makes provision for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage in Nursery and Reception classes.
- The sixth form has its own separate accommodation. Students spend some of their time following vocational courses at Shrewsbury College of Arts and Technology.
- Provision for older pupils with moderate learning difficulties is made at a The Mary Webb School, a local secondary school where there are three separate classes for Severndale pupils. This enables the regular inclusion of some pupils into mainstream education.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Ensure that teachers do not spend too long talking, particularly at the beginning of lessons, so that that pupils have greater opportunities to participate, complete their tasks and do more work in the time available.
- Improve access to outdoor learning for the youngest pupils in the Early Years Foundation Stage, so that they can develop their independence skills, make choices and decide for themselves where they want to work and play.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils is good

- The school's assessment information shows that the vast majority of pupils, including those with additional needs, make expected or better than expected progress while at Severndale. Parents and carers are rightly pleased with their children's progress.
- Pupils' progress in English and mathematics is good. Progress in developing communication skills and in personal development is particularly good, and is outstanding in the sixth form. There is no difference in the achievement of different groups of pupils, such as those with autistic spectrum disorders or physical disabilities. This is because of the good quality teaching, care and additional support, therapies and advice given to these pupils.
- Pupils' literacy and numeracy skills are well promoted. Progress in reading is good because the school has adopted an effective approach to teaching how letters and sounds link together. Pupils quickly identify new sounds and learn to read unknown words. For example, in one of the younger classes pupils eagerly joined in as they learned to recognise the initial sounds in words. The more-able pupils read simple three-letter words such as 'cat' by sounding out each letter.
- Pupils achieve well in mathematics, as shown by the way pupils in Years 3 and 4 quickly identified different three-dimensional shapes. They described the different features accurately, while less-able pupils achieved equally well as they correctly found 'one the same.'
- Pupils throughout the school develop their communication skills quickly, whether verbal or thorough signs, symbols or electronic equipment. Pupils with autistic spectrum disorders learn to use visual timetables to help them understand what is happening and organise their day. Those with profound and multiple learning difficulties learn to use a range of communication aids to make choices or give a response.
- Pupils' personal development is very good. It is effectively promoted in all lessons, and through specific subjects and the wide range of therapies available. The 'pupil voice' is strong and pupils are fully involved in offering opinions about changes to the school and in raising funds to help others.
- Children achieve well in the Early Years Foundation Stage as tasks are tailored well to their individual needs. In a story session, for example, pupils joined in eagerly with actions and songs about a farmer. They used their voices, signs or symbols very well to explain new words they had learned. However, children do not have independent access to the outdoor play area which limits their ability to make choices and decisions about where they learn and play.
- Outstanding achievement in the sixth form is a result of the exceptional teaching and provision. Students work extremely hard and attain high-quality accreditation. By the time they leave Year 13, all students have acquired qualifications that prepare them very well for their futures. They have many opportunities to learn about the world of work from the wide range of business links available.
- Pupils with moderate learning difficulties based at the Mary Webb School make excellent progress. In story-writing, for example, each pupil was given their own individual objectives which resulted in them developing their own plot, explaining it clearly to others and writing with imagination.

- Occasionally, pupils do not do enough work in lessons because teachers talk for too long. At such times pupils do not make enough progress in the time available.
- Those eligible for the pupil premium achieve as well as others in English and mathematics because the extra funding is used to employ additional staffing and to fund additional resources to meet these pupils' needs. The attainment and progress of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is similar to that of the other pupils in their class and ability groups.

The quality of teaching

is good

- Teaching is typically good and contributes well to pupils' good learning and achievement. The careful assessment of each pupil's skills ensures that suitable work and tasks are set that are not too easy or too difficult, and that help them to move forward. High-quality relationships and effective support ensure that lessons are calm, and the clear routines help pupils to know what is expected of them.
- Reading is taught well, and there is a good focus on improving writing skills, starting with the youngest children carefully making letter shapes in the sand. The teaching of mathematics is almost always practical which pupils particularly enjoy, eagerly working with shapes and numbers to solve simple problems.
- Where teaching is outstanding, teachers have very high expectations of what can be achieved. They ask pupils specific questions that help them to think for themselves and set tasks that are carefully matched to each individual's needs and abilities so that they make as much progress as possible. This was evident in Years 6 and 7 where pupils were studying the story of 'Mr Drybones'. Pupils improved their knowledge and understanding of the characters at different levels, in keeping with their differing abilities.
- Teaching is good for all groups of pupils. More-able pupils benefit from good levels of verbal challenge that help them to find answers for themselves. Strategies to engage those with challenging behaviour are effective, enabling them to stay in class and take turns with others. Pupils with autism benefit from very good use of symbols and pictures by teachers, so that they understand what is expected of them and communicate their views and needs.
- Communication skills are particularly well promoted in all classes. Teachers make the best use of the different approaches to suit individual pupils' needs. For example, where pupils have profound and multiple learning difficulties, technological or switch-operated equipment ensures that they can always make a choice or give a response.
- On a very few occasions, less successful teaching does not engage or challenge pupils because teachers talk for too long, so leaving too little time for pupils to complete their own tasks. At these times, the pace of pupils' learning dips.
- Teaching assistants make a significant contribution to pupils' learning. They question pupils carefully about their answers, listen to their reading and record their responses. The marking of pupils work is typically good and regularly shows pupils how to improve their work.

The behaviour and safety of pupils

are good

- Pupils are happy to come to school and show this by their improving attendance which is now above that found in most special schools despite the frailty of many. Pupils told inspectors that

they know how to stay safe at school. They get on well together and work happily in small groups.

- Classroom reward systems are effective so that behaviour in lessons is almost always good, and some is outstanding. This has a significant impact on pupils' positive attitudes to learning and full participation in activities. No evidence of any bullying was seen during the inspection. Older pupils say that there is no real bullying of any kind, and records show that any issues are quickly dealt with by staff.
- Behaviour is managed well on both sites, and pupils, parents and carers rightly say that behaviour is good. Pupils move around school calmly and with respect for others. Behaviour when waiting for transport to go home, when it is often very crowded, is exemplary.
- Only very occasionally is learning disrupted due to pupils' challenging behaviour. This is a result of the training in the consistent management of behaviour that has been provided for all staff. A small proportion of pupils have individual plans to help improve their behaviour. These are very thorough, consistently applied and pupils meet the targets for improved behaviour that are set for them.
- Pupils' spiritual, moral social and cultural development is promoted well through the subjects they study and the visits they make. Pupils are developing a good understanding of the wider world and know how to respond to others in various situations, both in school and outside.
- High quality college links and work-related opportunities for the oldest pupils help to prepare them very well for their futures.

The leadership and management are good

- The headteacher and other senior leaders have a strong vision and high aspirations for the school's future. They are effectively supported by the staff and governing body in achieving their aims. Leaders have successfully maintained the quality of teaching and achievement, and improved the curriculum and attendance since the previous inspection.
- The senior leaders make effective use of the national Teachers' Standards to improve teaching. This shows their strong commitment to improving teachers' skills so that learning and achievement can improve, and teachers can progress and be equipped for promotion. Teachers are given clear feedback on their teaching with ideas of how to improve their performance.
- Leaders have made sure that all staff are fully and regularly trained in keeping pupils safe and in promoting good quality learning. For example, regular training in the use of signs and symbols is having a positive impact on pupils' improving communication skills.
- Teaching and achievement are rigorously monitored through regular observations and analysis of information. As a result, senior leaders have a very clear view of how well the school and individuals are doing. They know that a small amount of teaching and learning requires improvement.
- Leadership responsibilities are effectively shared. Leaders throughout the school are fully involved in evaluating and improving teaching and learning. Leadership of the sixth form is outstanding. It promotes very high quality support, provision and outcomes for the students.

- There is a positive partnership between the school and the local authority. The school manages a successful outreach service which supports disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs in local mainstream schools. Effective support is provided to the school by the local authority, especially in identifying where training is needed and in supporting pupils' wide-ranging needs.
 - The school promotes strong relationships with parents, local schools, support agencies and a range of work-related providers. It also has very good professional relationships with the various therapists who work at Severndale. Their advice and support are integrated into the everyday work of the school and have a very positive impact on pupils' development.
 - Leaders make sure that all pupils have equal opportunities for learning and a successful future. This is shown by the high proportion of pupils who benefit from individual support, the way that all pupils are included on trips, and in the many accreditation and vocational opportunities provided to suit pupils' differing needs.
 - **The governance of the school:**
 - Governors are knowledgeable about the school. They are fully committed to their roles and regularly challenge leaders about the decisions they make. They have a wide range of skills that they use for the benefit of the school. Their involvement in evaluating the schools' outcomes means that they are fully aware of how well the school is doing and what needs to improve. They are ambitious for the school to be outstanding. Governors are aware that a small amount of teaching requires improvement and they place a strong emphasis on improving the performance of staff through training. Governors have made sure that there is an appropriate link between salary increases for staff and the quality of their work. They make sure that finances are well managed and that money allocated for those in receipt of pupil premium funding is spent for the benefit of those pupils. They ensure that statutory duties, including those for safeguarding pupils, are met.
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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	123634
Local authority	Shropshire
Inspection number	403801

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

Type of school	Special
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	3–19
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in the sixth form	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	340
Of which, number on roll in sixth form	50
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Lyn Hough
Headteacher	Chris Davies
Date of previous school inspection	7 July 2010
Telephone number	01743 281600
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Email address	admin@severndale.org

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