

Springfield Community Special School

Springfield Road, Leek, ST13 6LQ

Inspection dates 5–6 February 2014

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		Good	2
Leadership and management		Good	2

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school.

- The majority of pupils make good progress and improve well in developing their early academic skills and aspects of their personal development. Children in the Early Years Foundation Stage and older pupils in science make outstanding progress.
- Teaching is consistently good, and there is also some outstanding teaching. Teaching at its best is lively and moves pupils' learning forward at pace.
- The executive headteacher has made the checking of teaching a high priority and this is beginning to lead to more outstanding teaching and better progress for many pupils.
- The use of school assessment information to track more closely how well pupils are doing has been a new initiative and has enabled staff to identify when pupils are under-performing and take action to address the issues quickly.
- Pupils' behaviour and safety are good. They make impressive gains in their personal development such as accessing community facilities more readily or needing less adult support in lessons or on school transport.
- Leaders, senior managers and governors have a clear view of the areas the school can improve further. The federation arrangements are beginning to have an increasingly positive impact upon school improvement. The sharing of outstanding teaching practice and ideas across the federation is gaining momentum.
- The school promotes the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils extremely well. The celebration of festivals, lunchtime clubs and the vibrant ethos of the school, add a rich dimension and enjoyment to pupils' experiences.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Signing and helpful marking of pupils' work are inconsistent. Some pupils are off-task for too long and this reduces their progress.
- Measures to check the impact of pupil premium funding are not in place and the school's website has some statutory information missing.

Information about this inspection

- The inspection team observed 10 lessons, all but two of which were jointly observed with members of the senior leadership team.
- Inspectors held discussions with senior leaders, pupils, members of the governing body and a representative of the local authority.
- There were insufficient parent responses to the online questionnaire, Parent View, but the school’s own survey of parents was considered.
- The inspection team looked at a range of documentation including the school’s information on pupils’ progress, its self-evaluation, development plans and information relating to the safeguarding of pupils.

Inspection team

Frank Price, Lead inspector	Additional Inspector
Roisin Chambers	Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- Springfield School is a hard federation of two primary special schools. It shares the same governing body and executive headteacher with Horton Lodge special school. The schools are located on separate sites in Leek, Staffordshire. The schools federated in April 2012.
- The executive headteacher took up his post in September 2012.
- All pupils have a statement of special educational needs. The range of learning needs incorporates severe, profound and multiple learning difficulties and those with autism, but almost all have communication difficulties.
- The proportion of pupils for whom the school receives pupil premium funding (additional funding allocated by the government for certain groups of pupils, in this case, those who are known to be eligible for free school meals and who are looked after by the local authority) is average.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Increase the amount of outstanding teaching and improve pupils' progress by;
 - using signing to assist pupils' communication skills more consistently across the school
 - improving the marking of pupils' work, where appropriate, so they know what they need to work on next
 - making sure all pupils take as much part in lessons as they can.
- Develop ways to measure the effectiveness of the pupil premium and ensure the school's website contains all relevant statutory information.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils is good

- Most pupils make good progress, from particularly low starting points that are due to the nature of their learning difficulties. Their progress compares well with national comparisons, so that there are a high proportion of pupils that make expected or better than expected progress. Pupils' progress in science by the end of Key Stage 2 is outstanding as all pupils make better than expected progress.
- Children in the Early Years Foundation stage make outstanding progress from their individual starting points. They eagerly explore the stimulating activities on offer. They matched symbols to letters and enjoyed finding out what objects were in the box beginning with the letter 'h'. They are provided with varied and imaginative experiences and this enthuses their learning exceptionally well. They are prepared well for Year 1, as they become more adept at following routines and concentrating for longer periods of time.
- In literacy, more-able pupils read simple books with interest and use full stops and capital letters when writing about their experiences. Less-able pupils enjoy listening to familiar stories and use symbols to help them read simple text.
- In numeracy, some pupils count to 20 and a few can do simple multiplication. Less-able pupils work on number and coin recognition.
- Pupils develop their communication skills well, particularly through the use of symbols, to help both their understanding and expressive language. However, signing is not used widely enough across the school and this limits the progress of some pupils.
- The tracking of pupils' progress has been tightened up and through the use of a 'traffic light' system, it is easy to spot who is doing well and who is not. When there is a cause for concern, effective remedies are put in place to help pupils to catch up. The tracking system also shows how well all pupils are progressing, including those with profound and complex learning needs and more-able pupils. This information is carefully checked to make sure that pupils are being stretched appropriately.
- Teaching assistants are deployed well to help meet the wide range of learning needs in each class and this effective support promotes pupils' good progress.
- Pupils who receive additional funding through the pupil premium use tablet technology to help their communication skills and to help improve writing skills. However, assessment information does not yet show how well they achieve in relation to their peers.
- Primary sport funding has been used to increase the range of physical activities. Some pupils receive specialist swimming instruction and this has resulted in some pupils being able to swim without floatation aids.
- The school tracks pupils' progress very effectively in non-academic areas such as needing fewer staff to manage their needs and improvements at home. This shows that pupils make excellent progress in aspects of their personal development and helps to equip them with life-skills.
- Pupils with autism make good progress in following routines and working for more extended periods of time on activities. They gradually learn to become more tolerant of other people and change activities with fewer outbursts.

The quality of teaching is good

- The quality of teaching is good, with an increasing amount that is outstanding. In an excellent physical education lesson, pupils built well on previous learning and developed different ways of travelling on their mats and recorded their results on an electronic tablet. They were highly motivated and responded to the high expectations and challenges that the teacher set for them.
- Pupils' attitudes to learning are enthusiastic. They are keen to experience new activities and enjoy school a great deal. They learn to concentrate for more extended periods of time and revel in praise.
- Class numbers are large in most groups. However, through the superb use of other adults and the accommodation, this potential problem is mitigated. Pupils receive good support and attention to help them to achieve well. Lessons are often divided into smaller groups to allow different activities to be taught according to pupils' needs.
- Teaching in the Early Years Foundation Stage is outstanding. Activities are well planned and organised and the school's work with families is exceptionally strong. Assessment information is used well to identify any gaps in children's learning.
- There is a strong focus on routine, particularly for those pupils with autism. Staff use 'now' and 'next' symbols to help pupils understand the rhythm of the day and this helps to reduce their anxieties and improve their understanding and behaviour.
- On occasions, staff are not alert to the fact that some pupils are not as involved in some aspects of an activity or lesson as much as they could be and this slows their progress.
- Pupils work is attractively displayed around the school. For those pupils for whom it is appropriate, their work in books is presented with care, but marking of work does not tell them what they need to focus on next.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- The behaviour of pupils is good. Their positive attitudes to learning contribute to their good and sometimes outstanding progress in lessons. Of the zest for school and learning, one pupil commented, 'I love the school, I was ill at home, once, for a week and I hated it.'
- The school's work to keep pupils safe and secure is outstanding. The school's procedures are very effective and the school works well with other agencies to keep pupils protected.
- Respect, tolerance and harmony permeate much of the school's approach and pupils absorb these values and show kindness and helpfulness to each other.
- Pupils learn about dangers such as bullying and cyber-bullying. They place great trust and liking in the members of staff. Pupils say they feel safe and that there is no bullying at school. One pupil said, 'Some pupils are silly, but they can't help it.' There have been no exclusions. Relationships are very supportive, without stifling pupils' independence.
- All staff are trained in behaviour management techniques and as a result there is a consistent and effective approach to managing challenging behaviour and this has also led to a reduction in

the number of recorded incidents. Staff are skilled in calming down potentially difficult situations.

- Pupils' attendance is average overall, but for most pupils it is above average. Ill-health is the main reason why some pupils' attendance falls below average.
- The school council enjoys meeting and have agreed an anti-bullying charter in symbol format. Members of the school council are active in raising funds for charitable causes such as Children in Need, Shelter and a local food bank.
- Behaviour and safety are not yet outstanding because on occasions some pupils' behaviour limits their learning in lessons.

The spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils is encouraged exceptionally well. Pupils enjoy the variety of lunchtime clubs, celebrating Chinese New Year and the regular assemblies, where achievements are acknowledged with enthusiasm.

The leadership and management are good

- The executive headteacher has continued to build and extend the good work that already existed in the school. His introduction of the new tracking system of pupils' progress, which is simple and effective and spans both schools, has been a valuable development and is establishing greater rigour and challenge for pupils' achievement.
- The federation is beginning to have a positive impact on both schools. It has encouraged the sharing of best practice, for example, on behaviour management, healthy schools, joint training, resources and teaching. Pupils from Springfield have benefited from increased residential opportunities at Horton Lodge School and parents value this provision.
- Pupil-premium funding has been spent appropriately, although measures to check its impact on pupils' progress, apart from anecdotal evidence, are not yet in place. Primary sport funding is being used to provide a greater range of physical activities to promote healthier lifestyles.
- Leaders and managers of areas such as the Early Years Foundation Stage and upper Key Stage 2 have developed their areas very effectively and liaise with the federated school to share and improve their knowledge and practice.
- The performance of teachers is closely checked. The close link between pay and the quality of teaching promotes good and improving teaching. Effective training keeps teachers' skills and knowledge up to date. For example, the school is regarded as having good expertise in behaviour management in the local authority.
- The range and subjects that are offered to pupils are excellent. The use of topics and imaginative ways of teaching lessons enlivens pupils' learning and accelerates their progress.
- The school's website does not contain some statutory information such as how the pupil premium is spent and pupils' achievement information.
- The local authority provides support to the school when required, but it is rightly viewed as a strong and improving school. Parents also hold the school in high regard.

■ **The governance of the school:**

- The governing body has an accurate picture of the school. The use of 'learning walks', which have a specific focus, such as how pupils' writing has improved, is good. Governors have been involved in strategic decisions such as the move to a federated school and they know how this is starting to benefit pupils of both schools. They hold the headteacher to account through direct questioning in meetings and have challenged the school to produce simple assessment information that is easily understood and this has been achieved. They know that teaching is at least good and have ensured there is a close link between teachers' performance and salary progression. However, while they know how the pupil-premium funding has been spent, they are less clear about its impact. Governors have received suitable training on health and safety, financial matters and safeguarding.

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	124515
Local authority	Staffordshire
Inspection number	440615

This inspection was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. The inspection was also deemed a section 5 inspection under the same Act.

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	54
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	John Alexander
Headteacher	Charlie Rivers
Date of previous school inspection	10–11 May 2012
Telephone number	01538 383558
Fax number	01538 383558
Email address	headteacher@springfield.staffs.sch.uk

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