

Inspection of a good school: Stanton Vale School

Thoresby Road, Long Eaton, Nottingham, Nottinghamshire NG10 3NP

Inspection dates:

29 and 30 March 2023

Outcome

There has been no change to this school's overall judgement of good as a result of this ungraded (section 8) inspection. However, the evidence gathered suggests that the inspection grade might not be as high if a graded (section 5) inspection were carried out now. Inspectors are recommending the next inspection to be a graded inspection.

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils are happy and safe at Stanton Vale School. They say everyone is friendly and helpful. Adults model the school values of 'working together, respect, aspiration and potential'. This helps pupils to fulfil these values for themselves. Leaders work hard to fulfil their vision that pupils should be resilient and confident individuals. Teachers assist in this by encouraging pupils to become independent. For example, pupils enjoy going out into the community and practising their independent travel skills.

There are high expectations for all pupils to achieve as well as they can during their time at school. However, some areas of the curriculum and how they are taught are not yet allowing pupils to meet these high expectations.

Staff cater well for all pupils' additional needs, including the most complex needs. Pupils have access to the support they need to help them communicate with others.

Most pupils behave well. Staff manage well the challenging behaviours with which some pupils present. There are few incidents of bullying. Leaders deal with these quickly.

Staff know their pupils well and build positive relationships with parents and carers. A parent commented, typical of many, that, 'This is a wonderful special school where the staff are knowledgeable, patient and kind.'

What does the school do well and what does it need to do better?

Leaders are ambitious for their pupils to learn and achieve well. They ensure that pupils' targets are ambitious and match closely to their education, health and care (EHC) plans. Leaders ensure that pupils follow the appropriate curriculum pathway, dependent on their educational, social and emotional needs.

Leaders have not identified the key knowledge they want pupils to learn and when in some subjects. This includes in the early years and the sixth form. This means pupils do not always build their knowledge well enough over time.

In some lessons, teachers do not always consider pupils' prior learning. They do not check to see what pupils do and do not already know. When this is the case, the activities teachers plan for pupils to complete do not always match pupils' knowledge and abilities well enough. Furthermore, teachers do not always check how well pupils are learning new knowledge. As a result, they do not routinely give sufficient thought to what pupils should learn next. This can limit how well pupils know and remember more over time.

Leaders have prioritised early reading. When applicable, pupils start to read as soon as they start at the school. All staff have received training to teach the phonics programme. Pupils not ready for formal phonics complete pre-phonics activities. Pupils who fall behind have one-to-one support to help them keep up. The books that pupils read match their phonics ability. Teachers promote the love of reading for all pupils. They do this through dance, song, massage and reading to pupils every day.

Children in the early years experience a nurturing and caring start to school life. They have individual timetables to ensure that they have their needs met. Children use happy and sad cards to help them understand their own feelings. They enjoy playing and exploring in the outside areas.

The sixth-form provision supports students well to prepare for adulthood. They study accredited courses, including English and mathematics. Students enjoy their computing and photography lessons. They have opportunities to undertake work experience on the school site, including by working in the laundry room, undertaking site management and operating wood turning. Students receive information about different career opportunities. They receive appropriate support to help them make choices about their next steps.

There is low-level disruption in some lessons. Teachers manage this well. It does not stop others from enjoying their experiences or their learning.

Too many pupils are frequently absent from school. These pupils miss out on their learning and the opportunity to develop their social skills by being with other pupils.

Leaders understand the importance of ensuring that pupils build their confidence and resilience. The forest school supports pupils to build their resilience and confidence. Pupils enjoy trips and visitors coming into school to support their wider development.

Pupils have some understanding of other faiths and of diversity. They know the importance of respecting people who are different to them. Pupils learn about different types of relationships and how to keep themselves safe.

Leaders know the school's strengths and what needs to improve. They work well with all staff to make the necessary improvements. The trustees support and challenge leaders effectively.

Most staff feel proud to work at this school and enjoy working with pupils. They say their workload is high, but they understand why the changes need making.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders ensure that all staff receive regular safeguarding training and updates. This ensures that staff are confident in identifying any pupils who may be at risk of harm. Staff are quick to report any concerns they have about pupils. Leaders swiftly respond to any such concerns. They ensure that pupils and their families receive the right help and support, including by working closely with external organisations.

Leaders know the importance of giving vulnerable pupils a voice. Pupils know what to do if they are worried. They learn how to keep themselves safe, including when online.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Leaders are still in the process of developing a well-sequenced curriculum, including in the early years and the sixth form. In some subjects, leaders have not yet identified the key knowledge that they want pupils to learn. As a result, there are inconsistencies in what pupils can remember about their learning. Leaders should ensure that there is clarity about what pupils should learn and when across all subjects, so that all pupils build their knowledge and understanding over time.
- Some teachers do not consistently consider pupils' prior knowledge when planning learning. Some of the activities teachers plan for pupils to complete are not always well suited to what pupils need to learn. As a result, pupils do not always learn as much as they should in some subjects. This can limit how well they achieve. Leaders should make sure that teachers plan learning that is appropriate for individual pupils' needs, so that all can achieve as highly as they can.
- Not all teachers use assessment well enough to identify if pupils are learning the intended curriculum. As a result, teachers do not always know when to introduce new learning. This can lead to pupils not becoming secure in their learning. Leaders should ensure that all teachers understand when and how best to check pupils' understanding, and how to use this information to plan what pupils will learn next.
- Too many pupils are frequently absent from school. They miss out on important learning, wider experiences and the opportunity to develop their social skills by being with other pupils and with staff. Leaders should ensure that they support pupils who are frequently absent to attend more regularly.

Background

When we have judged a school to be good, we will then normally go into the school about once every four years to confirm that the school remains good. This is called an ungraded inspection and it is carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. We do not give graded judgements on an ungraded inspection. However, if we find evidence that a school would now receive a higher or lower grade, then the next inspection will be a graded inspection, which is carried out under section 5 of the Act. Usually this is within one to two years of the date of the ungraded inspection. If we have serious concerns about safeguarding, behaviour or the quality of education, we will deem the ungraded inspection a graded inspection immediately.

This is the second ungraded inspection since we judged the predecessor school, Stanton Vale School, to be good in February 2014.

How can I feed back my views?

You can use [Ofsted Parent View](#) to give Ofsted your opinion on your child's school, or to find out what other parents and carers think. We use information from Ofsted Parent View when deciding which schools to inspect, when to inspect them and as part of their inspection.

The Department for Education has further [guidance](#) on how to complain about a school.

Further information

You can search for [published performance information](#) about the school.

In the report, '[disadvantaged pupils](#)' refers to those pupils who attract government pupil premium funding: pupils claiming free school meals at any point in the last six years and pupils in care or who left care through adoption or another formal route.

School details

Unique reference number	146054
Local authority	Derbyshire
Inspection number	10242252
Type of school	Special
School category	Academy special converter
Age range of pupils	2 to 19
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in sixth-form provision	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	99
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	12
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Mark Emly
Headteacher	Emma Kehoe
Website	www.stantonvale.co.uk
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Information about this school

- Stanton Vale School is a specialist school for pupils with autism spectrum disorder, physical disabilities, severe learning difficulties, moderate learning difficulties and social, emotional and mental health difficulties.
- Pupils study one of four different curriculum pathways.
- All pupils have EHC plans.
- The school does not use the services of any alternative providers.

Information about this inspection

The inspectors carried out this ungraded inspection under section 8 of the Education Act 2005.

- This was the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. The inspector discussed the impact of the pandemic and has taken that into account in the evaluation of the school.
- The lead inspector held meetings with the headteacher, the deputy headteacher, the assistant headteacher, the chief executive officer of the trust, and members of the board of trustees, including the chair.
- Inspectors completed deep dives in the following subjects: reading, mathematics, physical development, and personal, social and health education. The inspectors met with subject leaders, teachers and groups of pupils. The inspectors visited lessons and looked at samples of pupils' work.
- The lead inspector reviewed the school's safeguarding procedures, including the single central record and child protection and safeguarding policies. She met with the designated leader for safeguarding.
- Inspectors considered responses to Ofsted's online parental survey, Parent View.
- Inspectors considered the views of staff gathered through meetings with groups of staff and through responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire for school staff.
- Inspectors observed behaviour in lessons and during break and lunchtimes.
- Inspectors met with pupils both formally and informally.
- Inspectors looked at documents relating to self-evaluation, school improvement, attendance and behaviour, the curriculum and governance.

Inspection team

Anita Denman, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

Lisa Harrison

Ofsted Inspector

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