

Stanley School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	105138
Local Authority	Wirral
Inspection number	308775
Inspection dates	31 October –1 November 2007
Reporting inspector	Michael McDowell

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 on roll	
School	87
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Dr Jane Seymour
Headteacher	Mr A Newman
Date of previous school inspection	1 March 2004
School address	Pensby Road Thingwall Wirral Merseyside CH61 7UG
Telephone number	0151 6483171
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Age group	2–11
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one Additional Inspector.

Description of the school

Stanley School provides for learners who have statements of special educational need because of complex learning difficulties. While all learners have severe learning difficulties, many have additional learning difficulties and/or disabilities besides, including about a third who have autistic spectrum disorders. Learners enter the school with standards very much below those expected for their age. For this reason, the levels at which they work are well below national expectations. Almost all learners are White and British and speak English. The very few for whom this is not the case are at a very early stage in acquiring communication skills. Lack of English does not limit their learning.

Key for inspection grades

Grade 1	Outstanding
Grade 2	Good
Grade 3	Satisfactory
Grade 4	Inadequate

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 1

This school is exceptionally effective. Achievement is outstanding. Children in the Foundation Stage get off to an extremely good start. They make excellent progress towards their early learning goals. Learners in Years 1 to 6 build very successfully on this and achieve much more than expected. They do best in mathematics, science and personal, social, and health education. Their achievement is also exceptionally good in reading and in speaking and listening. However, in writing, which presents particular difficulties for most pupils, achievement is good rather than outstanding. These excellent results are brought about by outstanding teaching and learning. Teachers are knowledgeable and skilful in finding the best ways to help their pupils learn. They have great expertise in meeting the needs of pupils with the most complex difficulties. Together with their teaching assistants they support learning and manage behaviour very successfully. Most frequently, lessons are fun-filled, happy occasions in which learners thrive. Personal development is outstanding. From the earliest stages learners are encouraged to be sociable and to think of others. They love to help out around the school and they become much more independent as they grow older. They know that they are safe at school and really enjoy their school days. Attendance is good. In almost all cases learners are absent from school only if they are ill. They are very proud of their school. Their behaviour is excellent. The curriculum is exceptionally good. It fully meets the needs of individuals and the requirements of the National Curriculum. Opportunities for learners' personal development are excellent and widespread. The use of information and communication technology to enhance learner's communication is very good. The school promotes learning outside the classroom and beyond the school day very well.

The school provides outstanding care, guidance and support. It strongly nurtures the social understanding and emotional growth of its learners. Assessment and monitoring of their progress and personal development is exceptionally thorough. Learners are set challenging targets, kept well informed about their achievements and told what they should do to improve. Safeguarding procedures are thorough and are reviewed regularly. Leadership and management are outstanding and have been instrumental in raising the achievement and personal development of learners to a very high level. All who work at the school share the dedication of the leadership to continuous improvement. Parents have confidence in the school, which has moved on significantly since it was last inspected. The leadership, which enjoys the full confidence and support of the staff, is exceptionally well placed to improve the school still further. Governance is extremely good. Governors are supportive and consistently oversee performance and planning. They have great faith in the leadership but do not shirk their duty to hold it to account. Resources are used very effectively and efficiently. The school provides excellent value for money.

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 1

The Foundation Stage is outstanding. It is exceptionally well led and managed. Teachers and teaching assistants are very well informed about the children and fully understand how best to capture their interest and sustain their learning. Arrangements for children's care, safety and welfare are excellent. From the outset, although the children enter with extremely low personal and communication skills, they make very significant progress towards their early

learning goals. They become confident and sociable and their self-help and communication skills show excellent development.

What the school should do to improve further

- Improve standards in writing to levels similar to those achieved in reading and in speaking and listening.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 1

Girls and boys of all ethnic groups, irrespective of their learning difficulties and/or disabilities, achieve extremely well. They all make significant progress towards the challenging individual targets they are set and many reach or exceed these within the time allotted. National comparisons show that their performance is higher than that of other similar learners. Their achievement in science, mathematics, and personal, social and health education is excellent. Achievement in English is very good. Learners' progress in speaking, listening and reading is exceptional. However, their progress in writing, while good, is less marked. This is chiefly because of their specific difficulties. Learners with good handwriting skills find it very hard to move on to the next level by generating their own simple sentences.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

Learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is excellent. Children make a very good start in the Foundation Stage in learning to be sociable and communicative. Learners love coming to school and they show this by attending as often as they can. They obey their class rules and their behaviour and attentiveness in class are excellent. Over time, learners respond to the very good opportunities they are offered to develop their self-awareness. They learn to recognise their own feelings and to empathise with others. They are very helpful within the school, and through environmental projects and contributions to national charities, they do their best to help the wider community. The school council is well established and its elected members take their responsibility very seriously. They are full of good ideas to help make the school as safe and happy as possible. They are sure that their suggestions are taken seriously. Learners understand the importance of eating sensibly and being physically active. They show their commitment to staying healthy through their membership of the gym club and the food club and in their enthusiasm for sport. They feel safe and valued by the adults in the school and they are sure that there is always someone they can turn to if they are worried or upset.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 1

As a result of exceptional teaching, learners thrive, develop independent learning skills and achieve much more than expected. Systems to assess pupils' learning are extensive and thorough. Planning is detailed and teachers know their pupils very well. They match work to each individual's level very skilfully. Marking is analytical and used very well to help learners know how well they are doing and what they should do to improve. Teachers use praise very effectively to motivate and encourage. Behaviour is managed very well, and if because of their complex difficulties learners become distressed in the classroom, this is never allowed to distract others.

or prevent them from learning. Expertise in meeting the needs of learners with autistic spectrum disorders is very high. Excellent use is made of pictures, symbols and signing to enable learners to play a full part in lessons. Teaching assistants play a vital role in enabling learners to benefit fully from lessons.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 1

The curriculum is sufficiently flexible to meet the needs of individual learners across a broad range of learning difficulties and/or disabilities. Provision for learners with severe learning difficulties or more complex learning needs, including autistic spectrum disorders, is of the highest quality. The school provides excellent opportunities for learners' personal development. A particular strength is the very good use made of computer-generated symbols in communication. There is extensive provision for physical activity, including competitive sport. There are well attended clubs after school and at lunchtimes. Visitors to the school, including professional performers, broaden the learners cultural experience. There are very good opportunities to extend learning beyond the classroom through visits to museums, galleries and places of worship.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 1

All members of staff are fully committed to promoting the health and safety of learners. The clarity of health care plans is exceptional and the initiative to provide pupils with laminated health cards when they travel outside the school is innovative. The school works exceptionally well with parents to ensure that their children thrive both at home and at school. It provides support groups through the school nurse and other health and education professionals which promote consistent management of children's behaviour and healthy lifestyles. Child protection arrangements are in place and well understood by staff. The school has close links with other agencies. It takes the initiative in marshalling support from external sources for vulnerable children and families under strain. The monitoring of learners academic and personal development is exceptionally thorough, and challenging targets are set for them.

Leadership and management

Grade: 1

Learners exceptional achievement and personal development and the very high quality of teaching and learning are brought about by outstanding leadership and management. Staff members share with the leadership a common sense of purpose to make the school as good as it can be. Self-evaluation is rigorous and extremely effective. Commitment to inclusion is excellent and a strong relationship with a local primary school enables all learners to have some experience of being with their age peers in a mainstream setting. Parents who responded to the questionnaire or to the school's own sounding of their opinions rate the school very highly. The school takes parents' views into consideration and works with them very well. Governance is rigorous, and governors keep a close eye on all that goes on in the school. They know both its strengths and those areas that need further development. Measures for safeguarding learners are given their proper priority and all required checks on personnel and regular visitors are made. Resources are used very efficiently and effectively and planning for improvement is very good.

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Annex A

Inspection judgements

Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate	School Overall
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Overall effectiveness

How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners?	1
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	1
The effectiveness of the Foundation Stage	1
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	1

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	1
The standards ¹ reached by learners	4
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	1
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	1

Personal development and well-being

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	1
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	1
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	1
How well learners enjoy their education	1
The attendance of learners	2
The behaviour of learners	1
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	1
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	1

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	1
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	1
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	1

¹ Grade 1 - Exceptionally and consistently high; Grade 2 - Generally above average with none significantly below average; Grade 3 - Broadly average to below average; Grade 4 - Exceptionally low.

Annex A

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	1
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	1
How effectively leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	1
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	1
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	1
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	1
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	1
Do procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements?	Yes
Does this school require special measures?	No
Does this school require a notice to improve?	No

Annex B**Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection**

Thank you very much for being so welcoming when I inspected your school. You were very helpful when I visited your classrooms. I particularly wish to thank the school council for meeting with me and telling me about the things they do for the school and all their good ideas to make it even better. You told me that you like your school very much. You know that your teachers and all the grown-ups who work with you do their best to keep you safe and make learning fun. You are sure they listen to your ideas and suggestions. You like your lessons and playing with your friends.

I found out that your school is excellent. You achieve as much as you can because you always try to do your best. Most of you have made a good start in learning to write but you find it is very difficult to write your own sentences. While you are at Stanley School you learn to do as much for yourself as you can. You are always ready to think of others and to be helpful. Your behaviour is excellent. You are taught extremely well and your teachers give you work that you can fully understand and which is interesting and exciting. The school looks after you very carefully and keeps you safe. It is very well led and managed.

In order to make your school even better, I have asked the headteacher and the staff to do one thing:

- help you improve your writing so that it is at least as good as your reading.

Thank you once again for being so helpful.