

Stanton Vale School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	113041
Local Authority	DERBYSHIRE LA
Inspection number	311085
Inspection dates	11–12 October 2007
Reporting inspector	Rosemary Eaton

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	2–19
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	62
6th form	0
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mrs Carole Holt
Headteacher	Ms Jan Wells
Date of previous school inspection	4 May 2004
School address	Thoresby Road Long Eaton Nottingham NG10 3NP
Telephone number	0115 972 9769
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Age group	2-19
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

This is an average-sized special school for pupils with severe or profound and multiple learning difficulties. Currently, just over half of the pupils have profound and multiple learning difficulties. Most of the other pupils have severe learning difficulties and a few have additional exceptionally challenging behaviour. All pupils have statements of special educational need. The nature of their difficulties means that pupils are working at below national expectations. Almost all pupils are from White British backgrounds. The use of the school's residential facilities is currently under discussion with the local authority. There are no boarders at present. Residential staff have been appointed and provide evening programmes for groups of pupils. This is the first year in which the school has had a Foundation Stage class. The school is a regional centre for Mobility Opportunities Via Education (MOVE). This is an approach used to help pupils to develop their motor skills.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

Stanton Vale is a good school providing good value for money. The headteacher sees to it that the quality of care, guidance and support is outstanding. For example, lunchtimes contribute significantly to pupils' good personal development. Classroom staff and midday supervisors appreciate the stage of development of each pupil. Overseen by speech and language therapists they provide sensitive and skilful assistance. These occasions show clearly how much pupils like being at school and how much fun they have with their friends and the staff. Additionally, they are encouraged and expected to be as independent as possible. For example, staff allow plenty of time for pupils to choose their food by pointing with their eyes. Pupils who are mobile collect their meal and clear away. All this goes towards providing pupils with an exceptional awareness of healthy lifestyles. The Healthy Schools Award recognises the school's success in this area, and the good quality curriculum plays an important part in its efforts. While pupils with severe learning difficulties benefit from a wide variety of physical education those with more complex needs follow MOVE programmes. This range ensures that however limited their motor skills, all pupils have opportunities to develop them as fully as possible, become more fit and attain the maximum degree of independent movement.

The school does its utmost to ensure that pupils are safe and happy. Because they are equipped with skills and self-confidence, many pupils begin to take some responsibility for their own safety. For instance, those with severe learning difficulties learn to look after themselves in water and to take care when crossing roads. Programmes are available for older students and sixth form students to follow after the end of the school day. These support social development especially well. Pupils find out how to use community facilities such as cafes, becoming confident to communicate with unfamiliar people through speech or gestures.

Teaching and learning of good quality ensures that pupils make good progress overall and achieve well during their time in school. Comprehensive assessments of pupils' learning are very detailed and the information collected is used well in order to meet each pupil's particular needs and promote good progress. However, progress is not as good when learning slows down. For example, sometimes pupils spend too long in some lessons waiting their turn to take part in an activity. Progress is satisfactory in the Foundation Stage. In the recently established class for children in the Nursery and Reception Years, the curriculum is satisfactory rather than good. Resources and activities in this class are not always stimulating enough to promote good learning and progress. In contrast, effective provision in the sixth form ensures that these pupils make good progress.

The school is led and managed well and there has been good improvement since the previous inspection. Rigorous systems are in place to monitor each aspect of its work. Consequently, self-evaluation is good and provides a very clear view of strengths and areas needing further development. Where weaknesses are identified, the headteacher ensures that firm and thoughtful action is taken. As a result, a small number of pupils with very challenging behaviour are now making the same good progress as others. Parents have noticed how hard the staff work. This is just one reason why the school has good capacity for further improvement.

Effectiveness of the sixth form

Grade: 2

Sixth-form students make good progress and achieve well. They are successful in a growing range of accredited courses such as Moving On in aspects of vocational studies, life skills and world studies. The quality of teaching and learning is good and the curriculum meets students' needs well. For example, a tutor from a local college of further education visits weekly to work with students who have profound and multiple learning difficulties. This arrangement makes a very strong contribution to preparing students for the next stage in their education and is just one factor in the outstanding care, guidance and support provided. Leadership and management are good. Students' good personal development is supported effectively through work-related learning, including time spent in a simulated office and cafe. Opportunities for placements in the community are hard to find and so students seldom have this experience of the world of work.

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 3

The Foundation Stage class has only existed for a few weeks. Staff are working hard to develop their knowledge of the curriculum best suited to these young children. They provide some exciting and relevant experiences such as exploring an enclosed garden to find hidden musical instruments. The classroom and playground are short of stimulating resources for learning. The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory as are the interim arrangements for leading and managing the provision. Care, guidance and support are just as outstanding as in the main school. Children are settled and have already formed trusting relationships with staff. As a result, their personal development is good.

What the school should do to improve further

- Develop the provision for children in the Foundation Stage to the same high standard as in the rest of the school.
- Ensure that all teaching makes full use of the time available for learning.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Grade for sixth form: 2

Compared with those with severe learning difficulties, pupils with profound and multiple learning difficulties make progress in much smaller steps. However, when their particular starting points are considered, all pupils achieve equally well from Year 1 onwards. Individual and whole-school targets are challenging and are met frequently. Children in the Foundation Stage currently make steady rather than good progress. Throughout the school, progress is best in the key subjects of English, mathematics and science. Communication and number are especially strong areas. Pupils also achieve very well in physical development and personal, social, health and citizenship education (PSHCE). Pupils in Years 10 and 11 achieve well but they have so far not gained accreditation to recognise their successes. A new course has been introduced to rectify this situation.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Grade for sixth form: 2

Pupils' behaviour is often exemplary but it is good overall. Those who need help to manage their behaviour respond very well to the special arrangements the school makes for them. Attendance is above average. Most absences are due to pupils' medical conditions. Pupils are always happy to help each other. The senior-school council played a part in establishing opportunities for older pupils to choose some of their subjects and courses. Pupils regularly raise money for good causes, for example, by supporting the local carnival. Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. Visits by musicians, such as African drummers, successfully broaden pupils' experiences. Sixth-form students with severe learning difficulties mix with others when attending college, boosting their independence and social skills and preparing them well for their future lives.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Grade for sixth form: 2

Pupils' behaviour is managed well. Staff follow agreed approaches for individual pupils, providing plenty of praise to reinforce successes. Relationships are very positive, giving pupils confidence and encouraging them to get involved in activities and try hard. Teaching assistants frequently make strong contributions to lessons. Resources are often used imaginatively and are matched carefully to pupils' ages and stage of development. For example, younger pupils with severe learning difficulties enjoyed using puppets to illustrate the story of 'The Gingerbread Man'. Occasionally, activities are drawn out for too long so pupils begin to get restless and learning slows down. Time at the end of lessons is not used consistently well, for instance, to remind pupils what they have been learning.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

Grade for sixth form: 2

Throughout the school, pupils with profound and multiple learning difficulties have good opportunities for experiencing situations that stimulate their senses. Physical education, including MOVE, and PSHCE are particularly strong features of the curriculum for all pupils. Varied options for pupils in Years 10 and 11 and sixth-form students include foreign cultures and, very popular, belly dancing. Activities outside lessons make good contributions to learning and personal development. Pupils are frequently out and about in the community. They visit leisure centres, shops and parks. Older pupils have opportunities for residential stays, often involving adventurous pursuits such as rock climbing. The playground for Foundation Stage children and pupils in Years 1–6 is unsuitable for outdoor learning and lacks resources to stimulate play and exploration.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 1

Grade for sixth form: 1

The school does its very best to ensure that pupils are safe. Child protection procedures are rigorous and reviewed regularly. The full-time presence of a nurse adds significantly to the effectiveness of systems such as those for administering medication. Potential risks are assessed thoroughly and suitable steps are taken to minimise them. Staff training is extensive and ensures, for instance, that the most vulnerable pupils are moved expertly from one position to another. A wide range of agencies such as health care professionals supports the school's work. Staff have a very good understanding of how well pupils are learning and the next stage in their development. Parents are kept up to date, for example, through home/school books.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

Grade for sixth form: 2

The outcomes of the comprehensive monitoring systems are analysed carefully by the headteacher and, increasingly, the senior leadership team. For example, the targets set for pupils are scrutinised carefully and their quality and usefulness assessed. The support provided subsequently to teachers has resulted in clear improvements in the targets themselves and hence pupils' success in meeting them. The senior team members share the headteacher's determination to move the school forward and carry out significant tasks very effectively. The headteacher is devolving more responsibility to this team and to subject leaders and co-ordinators so they take a greater part in evaluating aspects of the school and planning for improvement. Governance is satisfactory. Governors are very supportive and well informed. They are developing ways of finding out more about the school at first-hand. The school supports others, locally and nationally, through its expertise in MOVE.

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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	16-19
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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?	2	2
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes	Yes
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	2	2
The effectiveness of the Foundation Stage	3	
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	2	2

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	2	2
The standards ¹ reached by learners	4	4
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	2	2
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	2	

Personal development and well-being

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

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	2	2
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	2	2
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	1	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?	2	2
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	2	
How effectively leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	2	
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	2	2
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	2	
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	2	
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	3	
Do procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements?	Yes	Yes
Does this school require special measures?	No	
Does this school require a notice to improve?	No	

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

15 October 2007

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Stanton Vale School, Long Eaton, NG10 3NP

Thank you for being so friendly and helpful when the inspectors visited your school. We enjoyed our short time with you. We know you find reading hard so your teachers will tell you about this letter.

We were very pleased to see how hard you try to be healthy and safe. Well done! Your teachers and helpers look after you extremely well. We could see how much you enjoy school. This is because you get on so well with each other and all the adults. Also, you have such interesting things to do. We were surprised that the older students can learn belly dancing!

You learn a lot and the sixth form students get certificates to show how well they have done. The class for the very youngest children is still being set up. We have asked the school to make sure that this classroom is as exciting as all the others. In most lessons you learn quickly but sometimes you spend too long waiting to take your turn. We want your teachers to make sure this does not happen.

Your headteacher and the teachers keep thinking of ways of making the school even better. You are lucky to go to a good school like Stanton Vale. We send our very best wishes to each one of you.

Yours sincerely,

Mrs Eaton

Lead inspector