

# Ivy House School

## Inspection report

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	113047
<b>Local Authority</b>	City of Derby
<b>Inspection number</b>	311088
<b>Inspection date</b>	12 June 2008
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	George Derby

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

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<b>Type of school</b>	Special
<b>School category</b>	Community
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	2-19
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number on roll</b>	
School	65
6th form	15
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Ms Sandra Taylor
<b>Headteacher</b>	Mrs Pippa Sillitoe
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	7 October 2003
<b>School address</b>	249 Osmaston Road Derby Derbyshire DE23 8LG
<b>Telephone number</b>	01332344694
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## Introduction

The inspection was carried out by an Additional Inspector. The overall effectiveness of the school was evaluated and the following issues investigated: pupils' progress across the whole school with a particular focus on their communication; how leaders at all levels across the school are improving provision; the impact of the school's work in alternative and augmentative communication (AAC) and information and communication technology (ICT); how the curriculum is developing in Key Stage 4 which particular emphasis on accreditation.

Other aspects were not investigated in detail, but no evidence was found to suggest that the school's own assessments, as given in its self-evaluation, were not justified, and these have been included where appropriate in this report.

Evidence was gathered from the school's data, evidence of pupils' progress, observations of teaching and school life, analysis of parental questionnaires, discussions with staff and evidence from displays around the school.

## Description of the school

Ivy House is a long-established special school catering for pupils with complex learning needs, many of whom have a physical and/or sensory disability. The school has a mix of pupils with severe learning difficulties as well as those with profound and multiple learning difficulties, although there is a greater proportion of the latter than is usual in this type of school. An extremely high percentage of pupils have complex medical needs, which include chronic illness and degenerative conditions. Most pupils are from White British backgrounds with nearly 35% of Asian origin. As a result of their difficulties, pupils' attainments are exceptionally low, with many at a very early stage of development. This remains the case throughout their school life.

There are six classes, which include a Foundation Stage class and a post-16 provision (Continuing Education). The school is due to relocate to new purpose built accommodation in January 2009, which will be attached to a mainstream secondary school.

## Key for inspection grades

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

## Overall effectiveness of the school

### Grade: 2

Despite difficult circumstances because of an unsuitable building, the headteacher and staff work remarkably hard to ensure that pupils get a good education and achieve well. Ivy House is a good school because all staff have high aspirations for their pupils, many of whom have immensely complex difficulties. Another feature of this school's good teaching is that staff have a thorough knowledge of pupils' needs and a passion to ensure pupils make the progress they are capable of. There is a good vision for the school's future development, led effectively by a highly knowledgeable headteacher. The next stage in the school's future is being planned for rigorously and a lot of investment and staff time has gone into ensuring the new building is of the right design and has the best facilities.

While pupils make good progress in communication and in relation to personal targets, they make outstanding progress in their personal development. This is confirmed by parents and in the school's own records and displays. Of particular note is the pupils' evident enjoyment of everything they do, their great sense of personal achievement and the great excitement they display when they are praised for their efforts. Their self-esteem and self-confidence 'go through the roof' and their behaviour is outstanding. This is because the staff work unstintingly to ensure learning and lessons are exciting and that all are given all the help and support they need. Most ensure that what they want the pupils to learn is very precisely matched to their needs and state this specifically against each pupils' name in their planning. This is a school that truly cares about its pupils and wants them to do their very best against all odds.

Pupils' communication is supported well; computers, low and high tech communication aids are used effectively to enable children to have a 'voice'. There are high levels of expertise among the members of the AAC team who manage this area and assess the pupils; much is done to support the use made by teachers and other adults of such equipment with pupils. Some very good use was seen during the inspection, although in a few instances there were missed opportunities and pupils expected to make a simple gesture rather than respond using signs, symbols or aids.

The majority of parents are very positive about their children's education and care. The close relationships that the school has with its parents positively support their development, so that both school and home work closely together. Many of the parents whose children are new to the school recognise the determination of staff in helping pupils progress and say that it gives them the confidence that their children are in safe hands. One, whose child has been at the school for 15 years, summed up her views by saying, 'We will be very sad when our son leaves school next month. He is very happy and has good relationships with staff. We are very confident that he is well cared for at all times. Staff make sure he is able to participate in all activities, despite his lack of sight.' Another stated that, 'the most important aspect of my child's school years is knowing that the staff care enough for the children to want to do their best, to help them achieve their potential'.

A very small number have a few concerns. Some feel there could be a higher level of personal communication on a daily basis. The inspection judged, however, that given the measures the school has in place, communication with parents is a strength. A lack of hygiene was raised and, while it is acknowledged that the school is not an easy place to keep clean because of its design, it was perfectly acceptable at the time of the inspection. The school has a relatively high number of pupils with hearing difficulties. Some parents feel that there is not enough

specialist support coming into the school for these; this too is acknowledged. However, the school does try its best and makes great efforts to secure additional help for pupils with visual impairment.

As parents rightly point out, the care that pupils' get is of the highest quality and care, support and guidance are outstanding. Safeguarding procedures are securely in place. The teams of staff, which include support assistants, therapists and nursing staff work tirelessly to ensure that provision for pupils' personal, physical and medical needs is exceptional. This means that pupils with the complex conditions are able to maximise their presence in school and in lessons and benefit from the school's teaching. There is an excellent impact of pupils' health, especially through the MOVE (Mobility Opportunities Via Education) programme, the work done through Healthy Schools and the sports partnership. Attendance for this type of school, as a result, is good. There were many examples of unobtrusive support seen during the inspection with pupils being managed with the highest level of sensitivity. Through personal care routines and interactions in lessons, pupils develop excellent relationships with staff because they trust them implicitly. As a result, they are able to keep themselves outstandingly safe.

This is a school that constantly thinks and reflects on what it is doing and how it can do things better. As a result, it knows itself well. It regularly makes adjustments to pupils' experiences within its already good and vibrant curriculum. It has recognised, for instance, that progress in numeracy has been a relative weakness and has adjusted the way that pupils have more practical experiences in using and applying their skills. Similarly, those pupils with a relatively higher level of skill now have more in-depth experiences through the school's 'collapsed curriculum'; this is where what they are learning is much more integrated and based around topics of interest

As a result of a past analysis of pupils' progress, the school has modified its assessment systems so that it can assess pupils more accurately at specific times during the year. However, it does not keep enough information on the progress of the different groups of pupils it has, although a strength clearly lies with the detailed assessments on individuals. This change in assessment, though, has led to difficulties over how the school measures the progress of the disproportionately large number of pupils with the most complex learning needs. The new system does not capture the breadth of experience these pupils get or the very tiny steps of progress they are undoubtedly making.

The school is led and managed well and a particular strength is the way education and health personnel work together to gain a picture of the each child's needs and plan the next steps for a pupils' development. The headteacher leads by example and is a visible presence around the school; she clearly has the confidence of staff and parents. Improvement since the last inspection has been satisfactory, partly because a great deal of time has gone into ensuring the new building is 'right'. Much has been done to improve the monitoring by subject leaders and they now regularly undertake lesson observations, analyse pupils' work and assessments and report their findings to the governing body. Governors, too, have improved their monitoring of the school's work and are better informed but, nevertheless, still do not have enough oversight of the progress that pupils make. The move to accredit subjects in Key Stage 4 has been slow, although some recent developments have taken place. The work related programme is excellent and the school now intends to accredit this through an award bearing body. French is now taught throughout the school and links have been made with other schools. Pupils have enjoyed joint visits to France and have benefited from the social contact with other pupils. Given the high level of expertise within the school and the strong plans for future development, the school has a good capacity to improve further.

## **Effectiveness of the sixth form**

### **Grade: 2**

The Continuing Education (CE) provision is effective in preparing students for the next stage of their lives and is developing its award bearing courses through the 'Moving On' programme well. The leader of the area has designed an exciting curriculum which meets the needs of students, especially in focusing on key skills, and one which is effective in supporting transition. Teamwork is a strength and the work done by CE staff with Key Stage 4 personnel is also helping to establish some accredited courses in that part of the school so that there is a continuum in vocational opportunities right through from 14 to 19 years. Teaching is good because staff know the students' needs so well and build on their previous learning in very small steps. Students grow immensely in confidence as they undertake lots of practical activities, such as the activities undertaken on helping others through the work done on Buddhism. This helps them make good progress academically and outstanding progress in their personal development.

## **Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage**

### **Grade: 2**

Children in the Foundation Stage get a flying start to their education because of the great care taken by staff and the good knowledge that they gain about each individual child's development. Parents are confident to leave their children, often for the first time, and generally feel well informed about each day's experiences. The very strong emphasis on communication, personal and social development and physical skills helps children develop their own confidence to try new things, indicate their needs, and be supported in their posture; for some, they improve their strength and coordination. Children make good progress as a result of the good teaching and the daily assessments made on their development. Staff are well informed about what to do and are careful to break the tasks that children do down into small successful steps so that children gain a great sense of achievement. Improvement in their personal development is rapid because of the focus given to the whole individual and the use of teamwork to support each child. Staff make good use of the limited outdoor area for learning and mobility wherever they can, and within the limitation of children's medical needs and intend, through the new building, to address all the current limitations.

## **What the school should do to improve further**

- Keep a more careful track of pupils' academic progress over time, especially of the different groups, and ensure there is accurate recording of the very small steps of progress that the pupils with the most complex needs make over time.
- Ensure even greater consistency in the ways that pupils' communication is promoted through alternative and augmentative systems throughout the school.
- Ensure that governors broaden their monitoring role to include oversight of the progress that pupils make.

**Any complaints about the inspection or the report should be made following the procedures set out in the guidance 'Complaints about school inspection', which is available from Ofsted's website: [www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk).**

## 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	2	
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	2	2

### Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	2	2
The standards <sup>1</sup> 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?	1	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	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

<sup>1</sup> 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**

<b>How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?</b>	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

13 June 2008

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Ivy House School, Derby, DE23 8LG

What a good day I had at your school yesterday. You have a good school. You are a great credit to it and you work very hard. This is because the staff expect a lot from you and you want to try your very best. Here are a few of things I really liked.

- Your lessons are good and you are given lots of interesting things to do.
- You really like school and take great pleasure in your learning.
- I was particularly impressed with the way the Key Stage 4 pupils prepared for their 'exam' in their tuck shop work. They overcame their initial nervousness remarkably well and demonstrated what they could do in front of the school's examiner! This shows how excellently the school helps you with your personal development and you do extremely well. The students in the Continuing Education department also develop great confidence.
- You are also helped well to improve your communication and learning and do well. You are taught to use a wide range of equipment which helps you to 'talk' and get your messages across.

Mrs Sillitoe has worked hard and made the school a good place for you. I have asked her and the governors to make it even better by:

- helping some of you make better use of the ways you have to communicate
- keeping an even better track of the progress you all make.

Good luck in your new school building.

George Derby Lead inspector