

# The Fountains High School

## Inspection report

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	124504
<b>Local Authority</b>	Staffordshire
<b>Inspection number</b>	314942
<b>Inspection date</b>	25 June 2008
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	Jeffery Plumb

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 special
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	11–19
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number on roll</b>	
School	134
6th form	35
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Michelle Taylor
<b>Headteacher</b>	Philip Nickless
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	25 April 2005
<b>School address</b>	Bitham Lane Stretton Burton-on-Trent DE13 0HB
<b>Telephone number</b>	01283 239161
<b>Fax number</b>	01283 239168

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## Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

## Description of the school

This school is federated with its adjacent partner primary school, and together they share the same headteacher and governing body. A deputy headteacher manages the high school site on a day-to-day basis. Much of the vocational provision takes place at nearby colleges and on other off-site locations. There is outreach support to mainstream schools. The school provides for pupils with moderate learning difficulties, severe and profound learning difficulties and autism. There is a nurture centre for pupils with very challenging behavioural difficulties. All pupils have a statement of special educational need. A very small minority of pupils are from ethnic minority homes, and very few come from families where English is not the main spoken tongue. The proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals is typical for a school of this kind. There are a few pupils in public care. Boys very significantly outnumber girls. Pupils' attainment on entry is well below the national average, reflecting the severity of their needs. The school has gained the Gold Active Award for physical education.

## Key for inspection grades

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

## Overall effectiveness of the school

### Grade: 2

This is a good school. The executive headteacher, in partnership with a dedicated staff team, has put an exciting and relevant curriculum in place, which ensures that pupils' disabilities are not a barrier to their learning and achievement. By Key Stage 4, the vast majority of pupils work alongside their mainstream peers on work-related courses at college, which equip them with the skills they need for further education and/or competitive employment. Parents say, 'This is what lies at the heart of this successful school'. They are delighted with the good progress their children make and the high quality careers guidance they receive. By Year 11, pupils receive national accreditation in a wide range of relevant courses which successfully develop their life and work-related skills. They make rapid gains in communication and independence. Independent travel and feeding programmes are particular strengths. Higher achieving pupils learn how to travel to college independently and safely. They master bus timetables, and confidently use money to pay their bus fare. Pupils with complex needs use modified utensils to feed themselves, building their independence and self-esteem.

Achievement against the objectives on pupils' statements of special educational need is good. Overall, teaching is good. However, there is a small amount of teaching which is less engaging and slows pupils learning, where teachers talk for too long in lessons and pupils do not have sufficient time to get on with activities to develop skills for themselves. Aspects of care and support are very strong, particularly the transition arrangements between primary and secondary schools. However, the tracking of progress that higher achieving pupils make is not sufficiently refined; as a result, they are not always set sufficiently challenging targets for the specific next steps in their learning. Tracking of progress and target setting for pupils with the most complex needs is good. Pupils' personal development and well-being is good, and the school promotes their fitness, health and safety well. Leadership and management are good at all levels. Improvement since the last inspection has been good, as is the school's capacity for further improvement.

## Effectiveness of the sixth form

### Grade: 2

Students achieve well. They make good progress in their development of literacy, numeracy, and information and communication technology skills. They develop these skills in practical life situations. For example, using a budget they plan, prepare and cook healthy meals. The curriculum effectively equips them to become as independent as possible. Their work-experience placements make a valuable contribution to their development of work-related skills. Through managing a café at a local community theatre, higher achievers develop good enterprise skills. Students with more complex needs are included in the project through working in the café at a level appropriate to their needs. Teaching is good. Planning to meet students' individual needs is effective. Relationships between staff and students are very good. Students receive excellent advice about the next step in their education and are equipped well to cope independently in the community. They have very positive attitudes to learning, behave well, take pride in working hard for themselves, and thoroughly enjoy doing so. Leadership and management are good.

## What the school should do to improve further

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- Reduce further the small number of instances where teachers talk for too long in lessons and where pupils are consequently slow to engage in independent learning.
- Improve the system for tracking the progress of higher achieving pupils and use information from this system to improve planning and raise achievement.

## **Achievement and standards**

### **Grade: 2**

#### **Grade for sixth form: 2**

Pupils' attainment is well below the national average at each key stage but, given the complex nature of their learning difficulties, their achievement is good. Pupils make good progress in English, mathematics and science. Using switches and pointing with their eyes, pupils with very complex needs respond to questions and express what they want. The achievement of pupils with autism is variable, reflecting their disability. Some excel in spelling, but make slower progress in developing other English skills such as comprehension in reading. Skilfully managed, these pupils achieve great success in areas which are their strengths, whilst making good gains in the areas they find difficult. By Key Stage 4, a few pupils with autism make good progress in GCSE courses, such as science and art. The vast majority of Key Stage 3 pupils with moderate learning difficulties make good gains in reading and writing for a purpose, but also develop good creative writing skills. In mathematics, they learn to tell the time and manage money, but higher achievers develop a good understanding of algebra so that they can access a GCSE course in mathematics in Year 10.

By Key Stage 4, most pupils have developed the literacy, numeracy and information and communication technology skills required to cope independently at college. They blend in with their mainstream peers and make good progress in a range of construction and catering courses, leading to good accreditation. They develop very good work-related skills. Other significant achievements include travelling to college independently and safely. They are able to read a bus timetable and pay their fare on the bus, knowing confidently what change to expect. By Year 11, the majority of students achieve nationally accredited qualifications, which support them very well in continuing their education at college or finding their niche in the work place.

## **Personal development and well-being**

### **Grade: 2**

#### **Grade for sixth form: 2**

Pupils say, 'We enjoy school because our teachers are kind and they help us.' Overwhelmingly, pupils have positive attitudes to learning because it is fun and challenging. They love their involvement in community projects, particularly in managing an allotment and running a café at a local theatre. These opportunities help them develop work-related skills and manage money in business situations. Pupils with more severe needs bubble with enthusiasm when they collect eggs from a local farm and sell them in school. Through the vibrant school council, pupils make a valuable contribution to improving the eco-friendly environment of the school. The school successfully promotes pupils' interest in healthy eating. An exciting, all-inclusive physical education programme, which includes Outward Bound activities, contributes well to pupils' physical fitness. Pupils learn about the importance of safety in real-life situations, such as cooking a meal and being wary of strangers when they travel to college independently. Behaviour is good. As pupils develop communication skills, they become less frustrated and their behaviour improves. Attendance is good. Authorised absence reflects treatment in hospital for pupils with

severe medical conditions. The spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils is good.

## **Quality of provision**

### **Teaching and learning**

**Grade: 2**

**Grade for sixth form: 2**

Teaching is good overall and pupils learn well. Much teaching is lively as it is well planned and fit for purpose. A sensory approach benefits pupils with the most complex needs, whilst a structured approach with clear visual schedules helps pupils with autism to make good progress, particularly in developing communication skills. Brisk pace in most teaching keeps pupils engaged in learning. Teaching assistants are skilful in managing pupils' behaviour and keeping them on task. High expectations and challenge result in pupils making exciting breakthroughs in their learning, as seen in a Year 10 mathematics lesson on place value. Good use is made of computers to support pupils' learning. For example, in a Year 11 science lesson, pupils made good progress in designing a roller coaster ride on the computer. However, on a few occasions, teachers talk too much and this causes pupils to switch off and slows their learning. In most lessons, teachers develop pupils' vocabulary well. However, occasionally they miss opportunities to reinforce pupils' learning of new words through written activities.

### **Curriculum and other activities**

**Grade: 2**

**Grade for sixth form: 2**

The curriculum is innovative, creative and relevant. It makes a very valuable contribution to the development of pupils' life and work-related skills. By Year 11, pupils have opportunities for accreditation in a wide range of relevant courses. Inclusion with mainstream peers on vocational courses at a local college is a particular strength. Enrichment options such as sports studies and expressive arts, using off-site facilities, promote enjoyment and excitement in learning. The school overcomes its deficiencies in the accommodation for design and technology by ensuring pupils access quality courses in construction and catering at college. There are tailor-made programmes designed to meet the needs of pupils with challenging behaviour. The nurture programme focuses on the emotional development of these pupils. As pupils on this programme gain in confidence and their self-esteem improves, their learning takes off. However, this good practice of developing pupils' emotional well-being is not so evident for other pupils across the school. Pupils with autism have individual learning programmes which identify strategies for developing their communication skills. Feeding programmes support pupils with complex needs to become more independent in eating their lunch.

### **Care, guidance and support**

**Grade: 2**

**Grade for sixth form: 2**

Robust child protection procedures are in place and meet government regulations. Risk assessments, including of pupils' behaviours, are detailed and thorough. Pupils say, 'We feel safe at school and have a trusted adult we can talk to.' Parents speak very highly of the quality of care their children receive. Partnerships with external agencies are effective and support

pupils' needs well, including those of looked-after children. Careers advice is very good. Transition arrangements for pupils when they leave school are good. The speech and occupational therapists ensure that pupils sit comfortably to maximise their independence in feeding. The system for tracking the small steps of progress made by pupils with the most complex needs is good. The school uses data from this system effectively to set pupils challenging targets to raise their achievement. However, the school's system to track the progress of higher achieving pupils is not robust enough. Target setting to raise achievement for these pupils is not yet as effective as it is for pupils with more complex needs.

## **Leadership and management**

**Grade: 2**

**Grade for sixth form: 2**

The headteacher provides a clear vision, which focuses on developing pupils as young people who are able to cope independently in the community. The dedicated staff team of health and educational professionals share that vision and, working with a relevant curriculum, they successfully remove barriers to learning for vulnerable young people. Driven by a 'can do/let's do' culture, management systems are in place to benefit students. Hard budget-driven decisions have been taken by the headteacher in managing two schools, but they have been driven by pupils' needs. The headteacher has redesigned the staffing structure to meet pupils' needs more effectively. This is not a complacent school, and there is a commitment to improve further. The school's self-evaluation is good. Strengths and weaknesses in teaching are identified and data from lesson observations is used to target professional development where most needed. Governance is satisfactory and improving. The governing body is beginning to support and challenge the senior management team more effectively, but there are too few governor visits to classes to find out about the quality of provision.

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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 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?	2	2
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2	
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	2	
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2	
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?	2	2

<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**

26 June 2008

Dear Pupils

Inspection of The Fountains High School, Stretton DE13 0HB

We enjoyed visiting your school and seeing all of the interesting and exciting work you do. It was a privilege and joy to talk with so many of you and your teachers, teaching assistants and care staff.

Your school is a good one. You have a good curriculum, which helps you develop important work-related skills and maximises your independence. You mature into confident young people, able to cope independently in the community. You make good progress and receive valuable qualifications. Teaching and the quality of care you receive is good. Your school helps you to keep fit, healthy and safe and to express your own points of view about how school can be better for you. Your headteacher and teachers listen carefully to what you have to say and take action to make school even better for you.

We have asked the school to improve a couple of things so that it becomes even better. In a very small number of lessons, teachers talk for too long so that pupils switch off, so we have asked teachers to ensure that you always engage quickly in your learning. In addition, we would like the school to improve the way it gathers information about the progress made by those of you who learn quickly, and use it to plan to improve your learning.

Thank you for all of your hard work and your very positive attitude to learning. We are glad that you find your work fun, challenging and relevant. We ask you to support your headteacher and teachers in making your school an even better place.

Yours sincerely

Jeffery Plumb Lead inspector