

The Fountains Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	124505
Local Authority	Staffordshire
Inspection number	314943
Inspection date	25 June 2008
Reporting inspector	Graham Pirt

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Community special
Age range of pupils	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	74
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Michelle Taylor
Headteacher	Philip Nickless
Date of previous school inspection	25 April 2005
School address	Bitham Lane Stretton Burton-on-Trent DE13 0HB
Telephone number	01283 239700
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Age group	4-11
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

The Fountains Primary School provides for pupils with severe learning difficulties (SLD), and profound and multiple learning difficulties (PMLD). A quarter of the school's population have additional autistic spectrum conditions or other complex learning needs. A group of high dependency pupils aged 11 to 19 years are also based in the school. Many pupils, because of their disabilities, have the potential to display challenging behaviour. Most pupils are of a White British background, although a very small number of pupils are at the earliest stages of English language acquisition. The school is federated with its neighbouring secondary special school, and together they share the same headteacher and governing body. The deputy headteacher runs the school on a day-to-day basis.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

The Fountains Primary School is a good school that enables pupils to make good progress in their personal development, their well-being and their work. This stems principally from the enthusiasm of staff, who provide good care and commitment and an extremely supportive atmosphere in which pupils feel very secure. Good links with other agencies make a key contribution to pupils' welfare. A high priority is given to the promotion of healthy lifestyles, and pupils respond well to this.

There is a very high level of support from parents, who greatly value the work of the school and its staff. Their comments can be summarised in the views expressed by parents who said that: 'The environment is safe and happy' and another that they felt their family was 'part of the school'. This reflects the support given by staff to the pupils and the very good knowledge they have of pupils' special needs. Pupils enjoy the happy atmosphere of the school and develop confidence and independence.

Pupils' attainment is well below national averages but, given the complexity of their special educational needs, their achievements are good. They make a good start in the Foundation Stage and by the time they reach Year 6, they are well prepared for life when they transfer to another school. The reasons for the pupils' success lie in the good quality of teaching and the curriculum, which successfully encourage pupils to try new experiences and become more independent. The curriculum has been successfully adapted to support pupils' increasingly complex learning needs. In much of the teaching, activities are planned and adapted consistently to aid learning by all groups of pupils, although a small number of lessons start late. Staff are flexible and willing to try new ideas, especially when planning activities for pupils with more complex needs. This is particularly the case for the older students in the high dependency unit. Not all teachers make sufficient use of assessment information to plan the next steps in pupils' learning by building on skills and understanding already acquired. This limits progress, especially in science. However, planning for children in the Foundation Stage is a particular strength.

The headteacher and senior team have done much to develop the quality of provision in the school, so that leadership and management are good. Staff and parents confirm that the headteacher has made significant improvements in the school over the last year. He has a clear vision of where he wants the school to be and this is shared by staff and governors. All have a clear understanding of the school's effectiveness and what needs to be done to improve the school even further. The capacity to improve is good. However, the role played by subject leaders in monitoring teaching and learning is underdeveloped. This leads to inconsistent practices, for example in the use of communication systems in the classroom. The effectiveness of the tracking of the progress of individuals and groups over time also varies between classes, so that individual targets are not equally challenging for all pupils.

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

Children's skills on starting school are well below those expected for their age, particularly in communication and personal, social and emotional development. They make good individual progress, although standards are still well below average at the end of the Reception Year because of their special educational needs. Children make particularly good progress in developing personal and social skills, gaining greater independence and confidence in their

learning and play. For example, they enjoy passing balls to each other, sharing a 'rocker', and hunting for mini-beasts in the sand. Children's oral and signing communication also improves well, helping them to say what they want to learn, express their feelings and develop positive relationships with other children and with adults. This good progress is the result of a well-planned and imaginative curriculum, teachers' good understanding of the learning needs of young children, and the excellent caring environment which supports children's welfare and helps them feel safe. Positive links with parents also contribute well to children's good progress. The good teaching, including the one-to-one sessions in the 'workstation', focuses very well on the basic skills to be learned and gives children a firm foundation on which to make progress in the rest of the school. Staff have good skills in observing, recording and assessing children's development, although the reduced staffing levels limit the staff's ability to always capture significant moments of individual progress. Leadership and management are good, with a clear commitment to further development of the Early Years Foundation Stage, including an extended outdoor curriculum.

What the school should do to improve further

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- Ensure that assessment information is used consistently by teachers to help plan the next steps in pupils' learning especially in science.
- Develop the role of middle managers to improve monitoring of teaching and learning and ensure greater consistency of approaches to the tracking of pupils' progress and the use of communication systems in lessons.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

The very good care and support received by pupils, the good teaching and effective teamwork, together with good curriculum experiences, ensure that pupils' achievements are good. This is from a very low start point because of the nature of the pupils' needs. Children in the Foundation Stage make good progress, particularly in their independent, social and communication skills, because of the skill and dedication of the staff. As they move up through the school, all groups make good gains in learning. Pupils with SLD, autistic spectrum disorder (ASD) and those new to learning English make good progress, as do the students in the high dependency unit. The pupils with complex learning needs also make good progress in developing their self-awareness and sensory perception, with most of them becoming much more responsive and able to use signing or simple words and sentences to communicate. One parent commented that her child has made 'tremendous progress'. However, this level of progress is not always consistent because the use of assessment data to identify the next learning steps is not fully used. At present, pupils are not as successful in science as in other subjects.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils say that they love coming to school and parents confirm this view. As a result, attendance is good. Pupils' great enjoyment of learning is very much in evidence around the school, in lessons and in assembly. They develop good feelings about themselves and care for others, learning to share and take turns. They know which foods are good for them and which to avoid. They all work very hard in the 'wake up and shake up' exercises and participate well in a range of activities to stay healthy, including swimming. They say they feel safe in school, knowing where they can go if they need help. The school councillors are proud of their work in identifying

safe routes into outdoor areas and make a good contribution to the school community. Behaviour is good in school and pupils know what is expected of them, following expectations and established routines. Pupils are involved in many activities in the community, including charitable projects such as Comic Relief and World Book Day. The social and communication skills they develop prepare them well for the next stages of their learning, and life after school. Pupils from different ethnic backgrounds develop a good respect for, and understanding of, each other's cultures. The personal development and well-being of students in the high dependency unit is good.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Teachers' very good understanding of pupils' special educational needs helps provide interesting activities matched to pupils' abilities and so pupils make good progress in learning. However, planning is not always based on previous assessments in order to set consistently challenging targets. Throughout the school, teachers and teaching assistants work very well together to support learning and manage any difficult behaviour, leading to very good relationships with, and attitudes by, pupils. Signing and symbols, including visual timetables and cues, are used well. However the opportunities to use picture exchange communication systems (PECS) across the curriculum, which would further enhance pupils' ability to communicate, are often missed within lessons. Teachers often make lessons practical, for instance when pupils were using coins to 'buy' toys in the lesson, and this helps keep pupils engaged. At times, opportunities are missed to utilise different teaching resources such as interactive whiteboards. Also, on occasions, planning does not ensure time is used effectively, such as at the end of registration sessions, before lessons. Staff in the high dependency unit have developed very trusting relationships with the students that allow for good teaching to take place, such as in an outstanding session where students with the most complex needs participated in physical activities.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

Senior staff have worked hard to make the curriculum more suitable for the increasing complexity of needs of the pupils. Throughout the school, pupils experience a wide range of practical learning experiences that emphasise basic skills, communication and personal and social development. These have a significant impact on pupils' achievement in their personal skills, knowledge about healthy lifestyles and about their own safety. These not only significantly enhance pupils' spiritual, social, moral and cultural development, but also ensure that they are well prepared for the next stage of their education. There are often good imaginative elements to the curriculum such as the 'aquarium' in the PMLD provision. The curriculum is significantly enriched by frequent trips and events and links with other schools. All pupils, including those with additional difficulties, are fully included in activities, although at times the recognised shortage of staff restricts activities, particularly within the ASD classes.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

Pupils receive a good level of pastoral care and support. There are very good arrangements to ensure pupils' safety, health and well-being, including close monitoring of medicines and their

distribution as well as rigorous checks on staff, the records of which are well maintained. Training for staff is undertaken regularly. Very good links with outside agencies and with parents contribute to the good procedures for ensuring attendance. Parents praise the opportunities to come into school, through comments such as 'I am always welcomed by the school staff'. There are good processes for ensuring that pupils are guided and supported academically through the understanding that staff have of pupils' needs. However, assessment information is not used effectively in all classes to determine whether pupils are making appropriate progress over time and ensure that targets are equally challenging for all. Pupils with additional social, emotional or behavioural difficulties receive good support through the behaviour management processes which are effective. Pupils receive good support in preparation for transfer to other settings.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

The headteacher and deputy headteacher work very well together and complement each other's strengths. They have effectively managed significant changes to the school's organisation and intake while at the same time making sure that pupils sustain their good achievement and good progress in personal development. This has been despite a considerable reduction in staffing, due to a reduced LA budget, which has now been reversed. Subject leaders, however, have yet to take sufficient responsibility for monitoring of teaching and learning, leading to some inconsistent approaches to assessment and tracking of pupils' progress. Nonetheless, there is a common sense of purpose among staff that is helping the school achieve its increasingly challenging targets. The school has an accurate view of its effectiveness, which could be improved still further by greater analysis of outcomes of the improved assessment procedures. The combined work of senior leaders, subject leaders and governors has ensured that there has been effective progress since the previous inspection. Governance is satisfactory. Governors are effective in supporting the school and some are knowledgeable and challenging about the performance of the school, but there are few governor visits to classes to find out about the quality of provision. Parents are full of confidence in the school and its leadership.

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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?	2
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?	2
The effectiveness of the Foundation Stage	2
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	2

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	2
The standards ¹ reached by learners	4
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	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
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
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	2
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	2

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
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
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
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 Primary School, Stretton DE13 0HB

Thank you for making me and my colleague welcome and talking to us during the inspection. My colleague, Mrs Barter, especially enjoyed the discussions she had with you during the day and I enjoyed seeing you as I went around the school. I saw that Red House are doing well with their points but I'm sure both Green and Blue Houses could soon catch them.

- You go to a good school which is helping you to learn well. Here are some of the most important parts of the inspection report that we thought you might like to know about:
- You make very good progress in your personal development and are very well prepared for life when you change school.
- Teaching is good, lessons are interesting, you enjoy them a lot and do well.
- You enjoy lots of different activities such as 'wake and shake' and swimming and this keeps you healthy.
- The school works very well with different people who make sure, together with your teachers, that you are extremely well looked after.
- The headteacher and staff work very well together to make sure that you learn as much as possible.
- To improve further, the school should now:
 - make sure teachers use their assessments of you to plan exactly what you have to learn next;
 - develop some of the other leaders in the school so they know how well you do in your time in the school and that signing and symbols are used in the same way by everyone so you do even better.

We wish you well for the future and hope you will continue to work hard.

Best wishes

Graham Pirt Lead inspector