

# Coppice School

## Inspection report

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	124511
<b>Local Authority</b>	Staffordshire
<b>Inspection number</b>	314944
<b>Inspection date</b>	30 April 2008
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	Sarah Mascall

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>	11–18
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number on roll</b>	
School	91
6th form	13
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Christine Hannon
<b>Headteacher</b>	Sandra Baker
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	18 April 2005
<b>School address</b>	Abbots Way Westlands Newcastle ST5 2EY
<b>Telephone number</b>	01782 297490
<b>Fax number</b>	01782 297496

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<b>Age group</b>	11–18
<b>Inspection date</b>	30 April 2008
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## Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

## Description of the school

Coppice School provides for pupils with a range of special needs including moderate learning difficulties, severe learning difficulties, autistic spectrum disorder and those with profound and multiple learning difficulties. A small number of pupils have social, emotional and behavioural difficulties and a very small group of pupils have sensory impairments. There are a small number of pupils who are looked after by the local authority (LA).

Pupils enter school with levels of skills that are well below those expected for their age, and because of the nature of their special needs, standards are very low.

The school has changed considerably since the last inspection. It was previously a school for pupils with moderate learning difficulties aged between 3 and 16. In 2006, the school became a more generic special school. Primary aged pupils were moved to a local special school whilst secondary aged pupils with a range of special needs transferred to Coppice. This involved a change of staffing and adaptations to the building and resources to enable staff to meet the needs of pupils. The headteacher took up her permanent post after the previous inspection and a new deputy headteacher was appointed in 2006.

## Key for inspection grades

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

## Overall effectiveness of the school

### Grade: 3

Coppice school provides a satisfactory education for its pupils. Whilst many staff have adapted to the changes to the school population, a few have found it difficult and this has caused considerable problems in enabling the school to move forward at the pace it wanted. The commitment of the headteacher and a number of dedicated staff has ensured that pupils' learning has not been affected too much. As a result, pupils' achievements, including those in post 16, are satisfactory. For a few pupils, particularly those with profound and multiple difficulties, progress is good. The focus on developing pupils' reading skills has meant that many pupils, particularly those with moderate learning difficulties, make good progress in developing their literacy skills.

There is a very good focus on encouraging pupils to develop their independence and as a result, pupils make good progress in their personal development. Many parents commented on the increase in confidence of their children. One parent wrote, 'Due to staff at the Coppice School working extremely hard with my son to improve his confidence and self-esteem, he has matured and grown into a responsible young adult.' Pupils clearly like school and say they feel safe; where there is bullying they feel staff deal with this. Overall behaviour in and around the school is usually good. A small number of parents though have concerns about behaviour and there are a minority of pupils whose behaviour is not always appropriate. The school recognises this and is in the process of reviewing its procedures for managing behaviour.

Pupils say they are proud of their school because they feel they are doing well. They like their teachers. A strength of the school is the very good relationships staff establish with pupils. Teaching is satisfactory and has strengths particularly in the way teachers are extending their knowledge and understanding of pupils' special needs. Opportunities for pupils to be more involved in their learning are limited. Teachers do not always make clear to pupils what skills they will develop in lessons and the marking of pupils' work does not often identify what they need to do next to improve their work. The range of subjects and opportunities offered to pupils during the day is satisfactory and the school is in the process of developing the range of courses and accreditation further. The systems to support pupils' care and welfare are effective; however, those for supporting and guiding pupils academically are satisfactory. Targets to support pupils' learning are in place but these are not always of good quality and measurable. As a result, they are not used well enough by all staff to ensure that work in lessons is matched to pupils' abilities.

Leadership and management are satisfactory. Despite the considerable problems faced by the school, it has received recognition through several awards for its achievements. Senior staff have an accurate view of the school's strengths and weaknesses and have taken action to address areas for improvement. However, there has not always been sufficient focus on fully analysing all the information staff have gathered on pupils' achievements and identifying precisely where improvement is necessary. This in turn has prevented the school from setting itself challenging targets. As a result, governors and other interested parties do not always have the information they need to provide sufficient challenge and ensure they have a clearer understanding, and thus greater ownership of the school's educational direction.

## **Effectiveness of the sixth form**

### **Grade: 3**

The post-16 provision is satisfactory overall. It was established in 2006 and is still in the process of being developed. Staff are working hard to provide a discrete, more adult environment and the use of a separate annexe has helped this. The curriculum has been developed appropriately and is satisfactory. The range of opportunities for pupils to experience the world of work and college are good but there has been no evaluation of the curriculum to ensure that it meets the needs of all the pupils. Pupils have opportunities to develop their skills through award scheme development and accreditation network (ASDAN) courses and make satisfactory progress in their learning. The quality of teaching is satisfactory. Lessons are lively and pupils behave well and are attentive. There are limited opportunities for pupils to be involved in their learning and the marking of pupils' work is variable. Leadership and management are satisfactory and have been effective in establishing good partnerships with a number of work providers and this is enabling pupils to be adequately prepared for life when they leave school. Procedures for checking on the progress of pupils and ensuring that developments are clear and relevant are not always sufficiently robust for all pupils.

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

- Make better use of the information about pupils' achievements so that staff and governors can set challenging targets for the school's development.
- Improve the quality of pupils' targets for learning so that they can be used more effectively by staff to ensure that work is matched to pupils' abilities.
- Involve pupils more in their learning by ensuring that they understand what they will learn in lessons, and ensure marking of their work enables them to be clear about what they need to do to improve.

A small proportion of the schools whose overall effectiveness is judged satisfactory but which have areas of underperformance will receive a monitoring visit by an Ofsted inspector before their next section 5 inspection.

## **Achievement and standards**

### **Grade: 3**

#### **Grade for sixth form: 3**

From very low starting points, pupils make satisfactory progress in their learning. There are areas where pupils make good progress. Pupils' skills in reading are well promoted throughout the school and as a result, most pupils make good progress in literacy. Progress in mathematics is more variable but satisfactory overall. For those pupils with profound and multiple learning difficulties progress is good because they benefit from good teaching.

By the time they finish Year 11 pupils have achieved satisfactory passes in a range of accreditation including ASDAN and entry level English. Opportunities for accreditation in mathematics have been limited but pupils are now studying for entry-level qualifications. Opportunities for more able pupils to have their successes recognised through GCSEs are limited at present.

## Personal development and well-being

**Grade: 2**

**Grade for sixth form: 2**

Pupils are extremely positive about their school and their good attendance reflects their enjoyment. They comment on how much they like seeing their friends and teachers and a number of parents confirmed their children's keenness to attend. Pupils show a good understanding of healthy living. They know what is good for them in their diet and also know that they do not always make the right choices. Many are involved in sports and are keen to talk about all the different activities in school such as playing chess and participating in the dance class.

The spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils is good. Pupils enjoy opportunities to be involved in their own and the local community. The school council has played an important part in bringing about changes in the school. The improved confidence of pupils is reflected in the way they are keen to take on responsibilities and are prepared to take on parts in the school play. Their enjoyment and laughter while practising for this event and the positive support they gave each other reflects the good progress they are making in their personal development. The majority of pupils have a good understanding of right and wrong and as a result, their behaviour is usually good. A small number of pupils though are involved in incidents of inappropriate behaviour.

## Quality of provision

### Teaching and learning

**Grade: 3**

**Grade for sixth form: 3**

Most staff have worked hard to develop their skills in meeting the wider range of special needs the school now takes. Many are improving their signing skills and extending their understanding of working with autistic spectrum disorders. The communication skills of pupils are promoted well through the good use of questioning, which encourages pupils to respond and listen to each other. Humour is used well and the very good relationships established with pupils ensure that learning is enjoyable. Teachers make sure lessons are as practical as possible to encourage pupils' involvement and this was very evident in a Young Enterprise lesson. Good encouragement and use of praise enabled pupils to make choices and explain their decisions.

Where teaching is most effective, such as for those pupils with profound and multiple learning difficulties, good use is made of pupils' targets and this enables work to be matched to their ability. This, however, is not consistent across the school and in many lessons; pupils carry out the same task regardless of their ability. Teachers do not consistently focus on the skills they intend pupils to gain by the end of the lesson and as a result, it is difficult for staff to always assess how well pupils are doing. The marking of pupils' work is variable and rarely encourages pupils to consider how to improve their work or gives them an indication of how well they are doing.

## **Curriculum and other activities**

**Grade: 3**

**Grade for sixth form: 3**

The curriculum has been satisfactorily developed since the last inspection and now covers the full National Curriculum. The school has been successful in improving opportunities for older pupils to experience work experience and college life. Pupils benefit from this and are satisfactorily prepared for life when they leave school. The school has recognised that the curriculum lacks flexibility and has introduced an enrichment afternoon. Good use is made of local artists and other professionals to provide pupils with different experiences and opportunities to mix with each other and be involved in the community. The school though has not assessed this provision formally to consider its effectiveness. Pupils benefit from a good range of activities after school and enjoy the clubs and the opportunity to go to France.

## **Care, guidance and support**

**Grade: 3**

**Grade for sixth form: 3**

Great importance is placed on the care and welfare of pupils, and systems for health and safety are rigorous. Child protection procedures and those for the vetting of staff are understood and followed. Pupils' individual needs are generally met well particularly in terms of their medical needs. However, the school is looking to develop provision for those pupils with more complex needs who would benefit from better access to physiotherapy and hydrotherapy. Support for those pupils with sensory impairment is good and is enabling them to access the curriculum effectively. Strategies for supporting good behaviour are effective for the majority of pupils but for the small number of pupils with the most challenging behaviours the systems are not having sufficient impact to enable these pupils to always conform. As a result, the school is reviewing its approaches in order to meet this group of pupils.

The targets set to support pupils' learning are not yet sufficiently well focused on enabling pupils to make progressive steps in their learning. Although some targets are appropriate, others are too vague and difficult to measure. They are not always worded in such a way that makes them accessible to pupils. When asked about their targets, pupils could not say what they were.

## **Leadership and management**

**Grade: 3**

**Grade for sixth form: 3**

The school fully recognises that the pace of change has not been as fast as it would have liked and the move to a generic school has not gone as smoothly as was hoped. The determination of the headteacher and senior staff to bring about change and to maintain stability, through what has been an extremely difficult time, is a credit to them. Staff morale has been very low as a few staff have struggled with the increased range of special needs of the pupils and this has resulted in high staff absences. Despite this, the school has moved forward and achieved recognition for its work gaining, for example, Healthy School status, Key Learning Centre status and the Every Person Matters award.

Senior staff know their school well and are accurate in their self-evaluation of its effectiveness. Whilst they have dealt with issues as they have arisen, planning for improvements over time is not as effective. This is because senior staff are not making best use of the information gathered about pupils' progress to plan for improvements and to set the school challenging targets. Whilst the governing body is very supportive, it does not have the information it needs to provide sufficient challenge. The school is receiving good support from the LA and this together with commitment of the majority of staff ensures that it has the capacity to improve.



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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?	3	3
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?	3	2
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	3	3

### Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	3	3
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	3	3
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	3	

### 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	3	

### The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	3	3
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	3	3
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	3	3

<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>	3	3
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	3	
How effectively leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	4	
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	3	3
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	3	
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	3	
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	

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

Thank you for making Alan and I so welcome and talking to us during the inspection. We especially enjoyed the discussions we had with you during the day. Your school is doing a satisfactory job and you make satisfactory progress in your learning. Here are some of the most important parts of the inspection report that we thought you might like to know about.

- You say how much you like school and enjoy all the different activities.
- Staff make sure you are well cared for and kept safe.
- You know a lot about eating properly and keeping fit.
- Many of you make good progress in learning to read.
- Teachers make lessons interesting and are developing their understanding of the different special needs of pupils in the school.
- The headteacher and her staff have worked hard to make sure you are not affected by all the changes going on around you.

To improve further we believe the school should now:

- set itself some targets for improvement based on all the information it has on your achievements
- improve your targets and make sure all teachers use them to make sure work is matched to your ability
- involve you more in your learning by telling you what you will learn in lessons and marking your books in a way that tells you what you can do better next time.

We hope that where you can you will help your teachers by making sure you know your targets.

We wish you well for the future.

1 May 2008

Dear Pupils



**Inspection of Coppice School, Newcastle under Lyme, ST5 2EY**

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We wish you well for the future.

Yours sincerely

Sarah and Alan  
Lead inspector and team inspector