

# Saxon Hill School

## Inspection report

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	124520
<b>Local Authority</b>	Staffordshire
<b>Inspection number</b>	314947
<b>Inspection dates</b>	17–18 June 2008
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	Judith Goodchild

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>	3–18
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number on roll</b>	
School	81
6th form	16
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Sue Bostock
<b>Headteacher</b>	Duncan Gorwood
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	2 February 2004
<b>School address</b>	Kings Hill Road Lichfield WS14 9DE
<b>Telephone number</b>	01543 414892
<b>Fax number</b>	01543 510626

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<b>Age group</b>	3–18
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## Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

## Description of the school

The school caters for children with physical disabilities but there has been an increase in the number of children with complex medical needs. Standards are very low due to the nature of pupils' learning difficulties and disabilities. A nurture group has been formed in response to the needs of a small number of pupils who have poor social skills.

A new headteacher took up post in April 2008 after a period of interim headship. The school has a residential provision known as the 'Sleep Over Club' where some pupils are able to stay for two nights a week. The school is a key learning centre which offers an extensive outreach service that provides support to several primary and secondary schools. It has successfully achieved special educational needs specialist status for sensory and physical needs with effect from September 2008.

## Key for inspection grades

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

## Overall effectiveness of the school

### Grade: 3

Saxon Hill School provides a satisfactory education for its pupils. Its key strength lies in the strong systems of care and welfare that enable pupils to feel safe in school and make good progress in their personal development. These aspects are much valued by parents. They speak highly of the standard of care and support they, and their children, have received from staff. The 'Sleep Over Club' contributes significantly to enhancing the social skills and independence of those who attend.

Pupils clearly enjoy coming to school and this is very evident from their happy, smiling faces. They say one of the best things about the school is the opportunity to meet up with their friends. They value the new lunchtime arrangements that give them more opportunities to socialise with each other. Their behaviour is excellent as are relationships. Staff treat pupils with dignity and sensitivity, are good role models, and pupils respond well to this. Teaching overall is satisfactory. It is good in the Foundation Stage and in the sixth form because learners' needs are met well and the students and children have a good understanding of what they will learn. However, although the school has a great deal of information about pupils' progress, it is not using this effectively to ensure that the needs of each individual are met. Consequently, work is not always matched to pupils' needs and their overall achievement is satisfactory rather than good.

Through a range of activities such as play leaders and the school council, pupils are encouraged to accept responsibility and make a contribution to the school community. From a young age, they are involved in enterprise activities and raise considerable amounts of money through their own efforts both for the school and their chosen charities. This significantly contributes towards the development of their work place skills, which are further enriched through work experience and college links. Pupils' gains in relevant skills for life beyond school, and their awareness and involvement with the wider community, are very good.

Whilst there are strengths in the satisfactory curriculum the shortage of teaching time available in the school day limits the range of learning opportunities overall. This is particularly evident in literacy and numeracy where opportunities are not sufficiently broad enough to enable pupils to make the progress they should in aspects of these subjects. Opportunities, though, are broader in the Foundation Stage and in the sixth form because there is more effective use of the time available than in the rest of the school. The school has been through a period of significant change. The new headteacher has worked hard to review the performance of the school in a very short period of time. He is well supported by the governing body and together they have a very good understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses. However, senior leaders recognise that the roles and responsibilities of subject leaders are not clearly defined. As a result, they do not all have a clear understanding of the strengths and areas for development in their subjects.

## Effectiveness of the sixth form

### Grade: 2

Students are happy at school and get on well together. They feel well supported and become increasingly confident, active learners taking ownership of their studies. They are fully involved in the choice of their further education options. They talk enthusiastically about their future plans, and are excited about going on to college at the end of their time in school. As a result,

their personal development is good. Students' achievements are good. They make good progress in gaining basic literacy and numeracy skills particularly those relating to work related learning and life skills. The curriculum is relevant for post-16 students and prepares them well for life beyond school. Time during the day is used effectively to ensure that planned activities meet individual needs. Good teaching results in all students making good gains in their learning and gaining nationally accredited qualifications. They have good opportunities to develop their learning about the world of work, for instance in their access to a range of vocational courses at a local college and work experience. Of particular note is the success students achieve in gaining awards in the Young Enterprise programme, competing against mainstream schools. The leadership and management of the sixth form are effective and ensure that provision meets students' individual needs.

## **Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage**

### **Grade: 2**

Children get off to a good start in Class 1 and make good progress. Although they are taught with pupils in Year 1, careful planning of what each individual should learn enables them to achieve well. They make particularly good progress in their personal development, gaining independence and confidence. This is related to the high quality relationships that exist between staff and children that make them feel secure. Good use is made of the limited time available, with breaks and lunchtimes used very effectively to promote children's personal development. A strength of teaching is the good use of communication. Children are encouraged to listen and their understanding is supported by the good use of sign and symbols. Staff have high expectations of the children and this is evident in how quickly they adapt to the daily regime without prompting. Leadership and management of the provision are good. There is good awareness of the need to adapt and develop resources to meet the needs of an increasing number of children entering the Foundation Stage with complex medical needs.

## **Effectiveness of boarding provision**

### **Grade: 1**

#### **Grade for sixth form: 1**

The recent inspection carried out in January 2008 on the boarding provision by the Children's Directorate of Ofsted states that it meets the required National Minimum Standards and the overall quality rating is good. Good progress has already been made in implementing the very small number of recommendations in the report. The 'Sleep Over Club' makes an excellent contribution towards the independence and maturity of pupils who are able to access this provision. Pupils are actively involved with managing the day-to-day running of the club, through the children's committee. They are encouraged to make choices, for example about the food they will eat, where to sleep and the kind of activities they would like. Sleepovers are organised in age related groups so that the excellent range of activities offered are appropriate for them. A popular option for older pupils is the youth club that gives them the opportunity to mix with a different peer group and extend their social skills and self-confidence as young adults. The experience of going ice-skating, including those in wheelchairs, has made a lasting impression on younger pupils and it is evident that they found it an exciting and incredibly fulfilling experience. Because of all these opportunities, pupils make excellent progress in their personal and social skills. The provision is greatly valued by parents and as a result, there is a long waiting list. The school is working to improve provision so that those pupils with severe

medical needs can have access to it. There are very strong links between care staff and the school and the provision contributes greatly to pupils' personal development.

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

- Improve the use of assessment data to inform planning so that teaching fully meets pupils' individual learning needs.
- Increase the amount of teaching time in the school day to enable pupils to make better progress in their literacy and numeracy skills.
- Develop further the roles and responsibilities of subject leaders to enable them to have a better understanding of the strengths and areas for development in their subjects.

A small proportion of schools where overall effectiveness is judged satisfactory but 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: 2**

Children in the Foundation Stage get off to a good start, they benefit from well focused teaching and make good progress. This, however, is not consistent throughout the school, and the pace of progress then slows and achievement is satisfactory. The shortage of time in the school day restricts learning opportunities for pupils in Years 1 to 11 and this has an impact on their rate of progress. Irrespective of their learning difficulties and/or disabilities, pupils' progress is good in the development of communication and language skills but there is insufficient time for pupils to develop their skills sufficiently well in writing and applying numeracy skills. By the end of Year 11 most pupils gain externally accredited qualifications that include Entry Level in English, mathematics and science plus a range of vocational qualifications. Those students who stay on to the sixth form build well on these and make good progress to gain further qualifications that serve them well for moving on to the next steps in education. The small number of pupils in the nurture group benefit from a more individualised programme and as a result make good progress in their learning.

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

**Grade: 2**

**Grade for sixth form: 2**

The personal development of pupils is good. The behaviour of pupils is excellent because all staff treat pupils with dignity and respect and they respond accordingly. Because of this, pupils feel safe and secure. For those who have difficulties managing their behaviour the nurture group has given them good opportunities to develop their social skills and they are now able to take part fully in the activities of the school. Pupils clearly enjoy coming to school and the majority of absences are for medical reasons to do with the complex medicals needs of the pupils. The contribution that pupils make, to both the school and wider community, is excellent. The school council provides an effective forum for pupils to express their views. The play leaders organise activity games at lunchtime for their peers such as a wheelchair slalom course and ball games for ambulant pupils. This also supports pupils' awareness of the need to develop a healthy and active lifestyle. Pupils become involved with community organisations and this, together with their enterprise activities, is good preparation for their life beyond school. The

strong links with the community, including different faiths, enhance both their spiritual development and multicultural awareness. Social skills develop well during the new communal lunch period, which pupils thoroughly enjoy.

## **Quality of provision**

### **Teaching and learning**

**Grade: 3**

**Grade for sixth form: 2**

Teaching and learning in the Foundation Stage and sixth form are good. Teachers know the pupils well and this enables them to plan interesting, well paced activities that actively engage them in the learning process. Assessment data are used effectively to provide work that appropriately challenges pupils to reach their potential, resulting in good achievement.

For pupils in Years 1 to 11 teaching is satisfactory. It has strengths, and teachers ensure that pupils, regardless of their learning difficulties are involved in lessons. This is particularly evident for those pupils with profound and complex difficulties who benefit from the good use of visual cues and resources and learn through sensory experience. However, assessment procedures have not been effective in identifying the steps in progress needed to be taken for each pupil. As a result, teachers do not always ensure that work is matched to the wide range of abilities in each class and pupils inappropriately often carry out the same task.

### **Curriculum and other activities**

**Grade: 3**

**Grade for sixth form: 2**

The very effective use of time available in the Foundation Stage and the sixth form significantly enhances opportunities within the school day. However, for those pupils in Years 1 to 11 there is insufficient teaching time available in the school day and this restricts the opportunity to provide a fully broad curriculum. The provision of most aspects of literacy and numeracy across the curriculum is good, but there are weaknesses in the provision for writing and the using and applying of numeracy skills. The school has started to address the weakness in writing through the increased provision of communication aids and identifying cross-curricular links where mathematics can be used. There is a good range of visits, including foreign residential trips, which help to enrich pupils' learning and enhance social skills. Apart from the 'Sleep Over Club', after school activities are restricted due to transport arrangements. For older pupils, work experience placements, community service and college links are particularly good and pupils talk enthusiastically about them.

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

**Grade: 3**

**Grade for sixth form: 2**

The standard of care within the school is high and all staff are committed to this aspect of the school's work. Parents are very happy with the school and the standard of care it provides. Great care is taken with the induction of new pupils into the school so that they settle quickly. The in-depth knowledge staff have about pupils' medical and personal needs helps to form the basis of the high standard of care pupils receive. This is further enhanced by the good working relationships with other agencies and professionals, some of whom have a base in school and

provide additional support for pupils. Assessment information is well used to identify pupils who may be at risk and intervention strategies are put in place. The intervention work for the nurture group has been highly successful in enabling pupils to mature and start to re-integrate with their peers. A small minority of parents expressed concern about their involvement with the school. Links with parents have suffered in the recent past but the headteacher has recognised this as an area for improvement. He has already started to make progress in this area. Safeguarding procedures are rigorous and secure. Health and safety is well managed.

Whilst the support for pupils' care and welfare is effective, guidance to enable pupils to make the best possible progress in their learning is inconsistent. Pupils do not have sufficient information to enable them to understand how well they are doing and to understand what they need to do to improve.

## **Leadership and management**

**Grade: 3**

**Grade for sixth form: 2**

The new headteacher has brought vision and clarity to the school and re-energised the senior leadership team. The self-evaluation process is effective. The headteacher has quickly identified the strengths and areas for development of the school and has already taken action to start the school improvement process. Through this, the school is setting itself appropriate targets. He is well supported by the governing body which is a strong team with a good knowledge of the school and areas for improvement. It has taken decisive action in the past to address previous weaknesses in senior leadership. It is fully supportive of the headteacher and his agenda for change and together they demonstrate a good capacity for improvement. Senior leaders are aware of the need to improve the roles of subject coordinators so that they can monitor the quality of work in the classroom and have greater involvement in the self-evaluation process.



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## 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	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 effectiveness of boarding provision	1	1
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	2	2

### Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	3	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	3	2
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	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?	3	2
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	3	2
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	3	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>	3	2
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	3	
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	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	2	
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

19 June 2008

Dear Pupils and Students

Inspection of Saxon Hill School, Lichfield, WS14 9DE

I am writing to let you know how much we enjoyed coming to visit your school and talking to you. Thank you for making us feel so welcome and helping us during the school's inspection. Your school is doing a satisfactory job. Your new headteacher has worked hard since the beginning of term to identify what the school does well and what it needs to do to improve. You already value the changes to lunchtime arrangements as you now have more opportunities to socialise with your friends. Here are some of the main points.

- Your behaviour is excellent and you feel safe and secure in school.
- You are well prepared for life after you leave school.
- Your enterprise work not only benefits the school but also the charities and appeals that you choose to support.
- The play leaders and school councillors work hard on your behalf.
- The teaching you receive is satisfactory, although it is good in some areas of the school such as the Foundation Stage and sixth form.

To make your school even better we have asked it to make sure that the work you do is better matched to your needs. We feel that you could do better in literacy and numeracy but the amount of teaching time is too short and we have asked for the school to extend this. We have also asked the school to better check on how well you do in all your subjects. Thank you again for being so helpful and friendly when we came to see you. You can help too by carrying on working hard as you have been doing and continue to behave well.

Yours sincerely

Judith Goodchild Lead Inspector

19 June 2008



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Judith Goodchild  
Lead Inspector