

# Heaton School

## Inspection report

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	106173
<b>Local Authority</b>	Stockport
<b>Inspection number</b>	324341
<b>Inspection dates</b>	19–20 March 2009
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	Rosemary Eaton

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 (total)	73
Sixth form	21
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Ms Beryl Barnett
<b>Headteacher</b>	Ms E Seers
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	11 January 2006
<b>School address</b>	St James Road Heaton Moor Stockport Cheshire SK4 4RE
<b>Telephone number</b>	0161 4321 931
<b>Fax number</b>	0161 4326 717

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## Introduction

The inspection was carried out by an Additional Inspector.

## Description of the school

Currently, around two-thirds of the school's students have severe learning difficulties and one-third of them have profound and multiple learning difficulties. Many of the students have additional needs such as complex medical conditions or autistic spectrum conditions. Almost all have communication difficulties. All students have statements of special educational needs. Most students are White British (a few are of minority ethnic heritage), and very few who are looked after by the local authority. The students between 16 and 19 years of age form the school's Extended Education Department. The school has gained the Healthy Schools and Sportsmark awards. It provides extended services for students including after-school and holiday clubs.

## Key for inspection grades

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

## Overall effectiveness of the school

### Grade: 1

This is an outstanding school. Since the previous inspection, outstanding leadership has ensured that the school has moved forward considerably on all fronts. Students' achievement is now as exceptional as their personal development owing to significant improvements in the quality of teaching and the curriculum. The vast majority of parents are delighted with all aspects of the school. A typical comment is 'The best decision we made was to send our son to this fantastic school.'

Through words, smiles or their readiness to cooperate with staff and take on new experiences, students demonstrate vividly that they enjoy school enormously. Those who are able to articulate their feelings explain that their friends are very important to them. The school works hard and extremely successfully to develop students' social skills. They become very aware of the needs of others and make an exceptional contribution to the school and wider community. All students learn to appreciate how they each make a difference, for example, by cheering up their friends, emptying recycling boxes, or taking healthy snacks round to classrooms. Tasks like these lay the foundations for more formal experiences of the world of work such as placements in local businesses or involvement in enterprise activities. Realistic activities such as handling money when acting out roles or visiting shops and cafes provide more of the opportunities that prepare students so expertly for their lives beyond school.

Owing to the nature of their learning difficulties and/or disabilities, the standards students reach are exceptionally low when compared with those in most other schools. However, they make outstanding progress as they move through the school. By the time students leave the Extended Education Department, their achievements have been recognised through a wide range of accreditation. Progress is often especially marked in communication skills and in their personal, social and health education. This is because the school lays great emphasis on these aspects of learning and they are taught and practised consistently during all lessons and activities. Teachers use their detailed knowledge of each student exceptionally well to set them individual targets and help them to learn in the ways that suit them best. Students themselves are not always reminded often enough about their particular goals. This means that they are not necessarily sure where they should focus their own efforts.

The school offers students excellent care, guidance and support and parents have full confidence in the way in which their children's health and safety is promoted. Students clearly feel extremely safe in school. As far as possible, they increasingly take some responsibility for their own well-being. They learn to be safe on roads or in the home, knowing for instance that 'cookers are hot and dangerous'. Leaders monitor the school's performance rigorously. When they identify areas of its work that have potential for further improvement they tackle these with enthusiasm and determination. As a result, for example, the curriculum for physical education has been developed significantly since the previous inspection. The scope of opportunities during lessons and enrichment activities, such as clubs, now ensures that there is something for each student to enjoy, from hydrotherapy to more adventurous pursuits such as sailing. This provision contributes to students' outstanding commitment to healthy lifestyles and enhances their self-esteem and ability to use their leisure time productively. The school's track record and the headteacher's success in building a staff team that shares her drive for continuous improvement are clear indicators of the school's outstanding capacity to develop even further.

## **Effectiveness of the sixth form**

### **Grade: 1**

Students make outstanding progress during their years in the Extended Education Department. By the time they leave they have each achieved a range of accreditation such as the Award Scheme Development and Accreditation Network (ASDAN) Towards Independence award, accreditation for Life and Living modules, entry level GCSE certificates, and the foundation certificate in Food Hygiene. These awards recognise students' successes in key areas including communication, numeracy and information and communication technology and personal, learning and work skills. Students' personal development is exceptional. They respond to the adult environment staff establish, becoming increasingly sociable, independent and confident. For example, a group of students visit mainstream schools to teach their pupils how to communicate through signing. Outstanding teaching and a curriculum carefully tailored to individual needs provide students with a realistic view of their strengths and their options beyond school. College link courses, work experience and opportunities to make choices, for instance, of leisure activities, provide highly relevant experiences and boost students' learning and personal development. The parents of students who join the school at the start of Year 12 are full of praise for the way staff help these young people to settle in rapidly. Outstanding leadership ensures staff are always refining what they offer students and exploring potential new courses and activities.

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

- Ensure that students are as aware as possible of their individual targets and how they can help towards achieving these.

## **Achievement and standards**

### **Grade: 1**

The school sets very challenging targets for students to achieve at the end of Year 9 and Year 11. Students' outstanding achievement is reflected in their considerable success in meeting these. In 2008, the targets were virtually all met and those for some subjects, including reading, mathematics and science, were exceeded. Students' progress in learning to communicate remains a particular strength because teachers are so adept at matching methods such as signing or exchanging symbols to students' individual needs and adapting them as their skills develop. For example, a student who uses a switch to operate a computer has just begun to press the switch purposefully rather than at random. By the end of Year 11, students gain the Transition Challenge award indicating their achievement in topics such as Making Choices. Some students with severe learning difficulties attend lessons in mainstream schools to take part in GCSE courses. There is no difference in the achievement of boys and girls. Any who are looked after by the local authority and those from minority ethnic backgrounds make the same outstanding progress as other students with similar starting points. Students with autistic spectrum conditions become increasingly able to cope with changes and focus on tasks, enabling them to achieve extremely well. The students with profound and multiple learning difficulties make outstanding progress towards their individual targets, for example increasing the speed or clarity with which they respond by gesture or facial expression.

## Personal development and well-being

### Grade: 1

Students' behaviour is outstanding. They do their best to abide by school rules such as 'be kind and gentle; make friends'. A number of students need significant additional support to behave well. They respond extremely positively to the individual programmes designed to help them control their emotions and impulses. The immense pleasure students take in all aspects of school life is reflected in attendance rates that are above average for similar schools and the high numbers attending clubs. Nine students are learning Mediterranean cookery and 14 play basketball after school. Students relish physical activity and are quite clear about which foods are healthy, explaining that fruit is a better choice than sweets. They recognise signs that warn of dangers and know that the emergency exit sign means 'you go out here if there is a fire'. They frequently show their concern for the wider community and know that children in some countries don't go to school but must work instead. Students readily take on responsibilities. Members of the school council, elected by secret ballot, lead the efforts to raise funds for charities and help to count the money they collect.

## Quality of provision

### Teaching and learning

#### Grade: 1

Activities are matched closely to what particular students need to learn next. In a mathematics lesson, higher attaining students in Year 7 worked independently, using photographs to help them name three-dimensional objects and place them under, inside or next to a box. They practised their communication skills as they asked each other, 'where is it?' Students with much more significant needs worked at individual tasks such as touching coloured targets on the interactive whiteboard. All the students were learning at their optimum pace. Teaching assistants make considerable contributions to lessons. Like teachers, they are extremely skilled at managing students' behaviour, spotting when individuals are finding it hard to cope. Students are given strategies to help them remain calm and are praised for their efforts. Relationships between adults and students are excellent and reflect students' ages. Staff allow plenty of time for students to make their responses and check, for example, that an arm movement really did indicate 'Yes'.

### Curriculum and other activities

#### Grade: 1

The curriculum is carefully adapted to meet the needs of all students as they move up through the school. There are particular strengths in the provision for performing arts and physical education. Both have a huge impact on students' personal development and demonstrate the school's extensive links with other schools and the local community. At various times, all students have opportunities to work or socialise with their contemporaries in mainstream schools. The curriculum is tailored sensitively to suit students with profound and multiple learning difficulties. For example, they have time allocated to work on individual programmes using resources such as the sensory rooms and pool. The school has identified students who have particular gifts or talents and makes arrangements to cater for them. A group of 'science explorers' recently took part in a special session in a mainstream school. The curriculum for students in Years 10 and 11 creates a highly successful transitional stage that prepares them for the Extended Education Department. A multitude of stimulating and popular enrichment activities includes regular visits

in the community, visitors to school, residential visits, after-school clubs, productions, and special days and weeks devoted to topics as diverse as dance, industry and Spain. As one parent observed, 'Students have fun!'

## **Care, guidance and support**

### **Grade: 1**

Current government safeguarding requirements are met. There is a full range of up-to-date policies, well known to staff. Staff have extensive training in relevant areas such as child protection, administering medication and food hygiene. Excellent partnerships with a very wide range of agencies and professionals enhance the school's work. The school nurse helps to develop care plans for the students with the most complex needs, identifying key staff to support them. A close eye is kept on patterns of absence and parents are left in no doubt of the importance of regular attendance. Parents and carers greatly appreciate the support they receive, for example, help with managing their child's behaviour or pointers to additional sources of advice. 'Staff work as a team with the family' is a typical comment from parents. The arrangements to help students settle in and to prepare them for moving on are thorough and sensitive. Assessment arrangements are very well organised with extremely detailed annual review reports. Students' and parents' views are valued. Some students are aware that they have individual targets but they are not consistently helped to understand how these can assist them to make progress.

## **Leadership and management**

### **Grade: 1**

The headteacher and senior leadership team ensure that the school strives to provide as well as possible for every student. This commitment is at the heart of its outstanding success in promoting equal opportunities. For example, special activities are arranged to compensate students who have not taken part in extended opportunities such as clubs. Self-evaluation is highly accurate and leads to ambitious and effective plans to move the school forward. The role of subject leaders has developed well since the previous inspection and they play a full part in monitoring the school's performance. The school promotes community cohesion well, resulting in students' frequent opportunities to be included in activities in other schools and the local community. Work is ongoing to extend links beyond the local area. Governance is good. Some governors are very new to their roles but are undertaking training and are well-informed because they are confident to ask questions of school leaders. Responsibilities have recently been reviewed and governors are rapidly becoming increasingly involved in monitoring the school's performance at first hand.

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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?	1	1
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?	1	1
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	1	1

### Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	1	1
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	1	1
How well learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make progress	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.

### Personal development and well-being

<b>How good are the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?</b>	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	
The extent to which 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	1	

### The quality of provision

<b>How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of learners' needs?</b>	1	1
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	1	1
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	1	1

### Leadership and management

<b>How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?</b>	1	1
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	1	
How effectively leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	1	
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	1	1
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination eliminated	1	
How well does the school contribute to community cohesion?	2	
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	1	
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	

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

Thank you for being so helpful when I visited your school. I really enjoyed spending time with you. This letter is to tell you what I found out about your school. Heaton is an outstanding school.

You told me how much you like school and I can see why. You have lots of exciting things to do and you make good friends. I'm sorry I can't see your production of 'Grease'. Your behaviour is excellent. Well done! You become young men and women who are ready to try new things and always want to help others.

You learn a great deal because you have outstanding teachers. The older students get certificates so everyone can see how well they have done. I have asked your teachers to keep reminding you about your targets. This will help you to know exactly how you can improve your work.

Your headteacher and the staff work very hard to look after you and keep you safe. They have so many good ideas to help the school get even better. I want to send them and each one of you my very best wishes for the future.