

# Springfield Community Special School

## Inspection report

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	124515
<b>Local Authority</b>	Staffordshire
<b>Inspection number</b>	328152
<b>Inspection dates</b>	22–23 October 2008
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	Graham Pirt

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

The registered childcare, managed by the governing body, was inspected under section 49 of the Childcare Act 2006.

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<b>Type of school</b>	All-through
<b>School category</b>	Community special
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	3–19
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number on roll</b>	
School (total)	53
Sixth form	4
Government funded early education provision for children aged 3 to the end of the EYFS	5
Childcare provision for children aged 0 to 3 years	0
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	John Alexander
<b>Headteacher</b>	Jennifer simpson
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	28 September 2005
<b>Date of previous funded early education inspection</b>	Not previously inspected
<b>Date of previous childcare inspection</b>	Not previously inspected
<b>School address</b>	Springfield Road Leek ST13 6LQ

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<b>Age group</b>	3–19
<b>Inspection dates</b>	22–23 October 2008
<b>Inspection number</b>	328152

**Telephone number**  
**Fax number**

01538 383558  
01538 383558

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## Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

## Description of the school

Springfield Community Special School provides for pupils and students with severe learning difficulties (SLD) and those with profound and multiple disabilities (PMLD). An increasing number of the school's population have a diagnosis of autistic spectrum disorder (ASD) or complex medical issues in addition to their learning needs.

The school has an Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) and is now only accepting pupils up to the end of Year 6, as the whole secondary section will be moving to a new building nearby in 2009.

## Key for inspection grades

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

## Overall effectiveness of the school

### Grade: 2

Springfield Community Special School is a good school. Pupils make good progress academically, and outstanding progress in their personal development. These achievements are supported by the often outstanding teaching and a curriculum which, because of the good activities that take place and the other enhancements, provides well for the differing needs of all the learners. The pupils love coming to school and one parent commented, 'My daughter wants to come even in the holidays. She says it's fun.' Pupils feel safe and are very well supported in this welcoming and very caring school. They understand about keeping healthy, knowing about and choosing to eat healthy food, taking part in physical activities and keeping safe. They behave very well and value the school. This is evident in the outstanding relationships they have, both with staff and other pupils, their good attendance and the obvious pride they have in the school and their own achievements. One parent said, 'Our son never stops talking about school – how wonderful this is for us!'

Pupils in the EYFS make a very good start to their education, making excellent progress in response to outstanding provision. Learning activities throughout the school are typically enhanced by the high quality of support given to pupils by the teachers, who are well qualified to understand and meet their learning needs and are supported by good teamwork with the teaching assistants. The improved quality of the school's procedures for assessing pupils' progress means that teachers watch carefully how well pupils are doing, planning work to ensure they achieve as well as they can. The tracking of this progress is good and provides a clear picture of progress over time. However, where the quality of teaching is not quite so good, support staff are not given sufficient direction and opportunities are occasionally missed to track short-term progress, either during lessons or when keeping records up to date. Pupils with autism are provided with excellent learning activities that challenge them to achieve to the best of their abilities. No group in the school achieves less well than any other.

A wide range of opportunities enrich the curriculum. Pupils take part in sporting events through the Sports Partnership, and in creative activities which add to their enjoyment of school and have a significant impact on their self-confidence and social development. Springfield has good links with the community and is well regarded because of its valuable work in supporting charities, although pupils are not always given enough opportunities to undertake activities in the wider community.

The headteacher and deputy headteacher, both in acting positions, express a clear vision and commitment to the pupils and staff, and are providing uninterrupted leadership and management to the school following the very recent retirement of the previous headteacher. They are supported by talented, hard-working staff who are equally committed. The governing body has been closely involved in discussions about the forthcoming transition to becoming a primary age school, and continually challenges leaders to improve provision. The school evaluates its own work very well. It has improved since the previous inspection, providing more exciting learning opportunities and improving the facilities, and has good capacity to continue this improvement as it becomes a primary school.

## **Effectiveness of the sixth form**

### **Grade: 2**

Students make good progress in their basic literacy and numeracy, information and communication technology (ICT) and life skills, and in their work-related learning. They make excellent progress in their personal development because of the procedures to help them gain experiences of adult life through business enterprise, creative areas and sport. Work experience is carefully adapted to their abilities. The staff effectively promote an adult ethos and mature behaviour. The good teaching results in the students achieving a range of accredited qualifications. The school has developed very good links with local colleges. The leadership and management of the provision are good. As one parent stated, 'Springfield has been the best possible placement for my daughter.'

## **Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage**

### **Grade: 1**

Children make outstanding progress in their communication, physical and personal development from their very low starting point on entry. There are rigorous procedures to assess and monitor the children's work, and their activities are very well matched to the small steps in learning that children need. All staff know their children very well and demonstrate this through the high level of individual attention they provide, leading to excellent relationships. The very effective partnerships with parents start with a thorough induction process. The children are very well cared for and consistently encouraged to understand the importance of keeping safe and healthy. They respond by behaving very well. The department is very well led and managed and the new classroom is being effectively reorganised to cater even better for the children's needs.

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

- Make sure that all teachers deploy teaching assistants effectively so that pupils are always actively engaged in learning.
- Ensure that classroom assessment is always up to date, and checks precisely what pupils can do rather than just checking that they have met their targets.
- Extend the pupils' learning experiences into the wider community.

## **Achievement and standards**

### **Grade: 2**

All the pupils achieve well during their time in the school, although the nature of their difficulties is such that levels of attainment remain well below average. Children get off to an excellent start in the EYFS. Pupils with particularly low starting points, whose success must be measured by smaller steps, make progress at a rate that is good, as shown through the pupil profiles, assessment and tracking records and analysis of individual education plan (IEP) targets. A high level of focus on the use of symbols, objects of reference and other aids helps considerably with the pupils' communication needs. The school's effective analysis of each pupil's progress helps ensure that there is no underachievement by any individual or group, although when classroom targets are met, staff do not always check whether they have been exceeded, thereby reducing levels of challenge.

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

### **Grade: 1**

Pupils have excellent relationships between themselves and with staff, displaying very positive attitudes and excellent moral and social development. They participate exceptionally well in the many sporting, artistic, musical and other cultural opportunities provided by the school. Pupils have an excellent understanding of the value of healthy eating and exercise, and because of the very good personal, health and social education (PHSE) programmes and very good opportunities to take part in physical exercise, they develop very well in these areas. Their behaviour is excellent both in class and around the school. Attendance is good with a very significant improvement over time. The pupils feel safe and confident and know what is expected from them. They learn how to keep themselves safe and report that there is no bullying or intimidation, expressing surprise when asked about these areas. Spiritual aspects of the curriculum have improved from the previous inspection and are now good, with examples in lessons and assemblies. The well planned activities and celebrations mean that they have a good awareness of cultural diversity. Pupils already make a valuable contribution to the community within the school through, for example, the school council, and there are plans to extend this further through out-of-school activities in the local community.

## **Quality of provision**

### **Teaching and learning**

#### **Grade: 2**

Pupils benefit from teachers' very good understanding of their learning needs. Staff's knowledge and understanding of pupils ensure that activities are linked well to pupils' abilities and so they make good progress. Signing and symbols are generally used well, although occasionally opportunities are missed to extend pupils' skills further. There is real teaching expertise evident that supports much outstanding learning through the active and creative planning of tasks. All staff have developed very trusting relationships with the pupils. They are encouraging and always celebrate effort and achievement with lots of praise and rewards. This ensures that pupils try hard and really enjoy learning. At most times there is excellent teamwork between teachers and support staff which ensures that all know their roles and responsibilities during lessons. Occasionally teaching assistants are not deployed effectively and this leads to occasions where pupils are not fully challenged. The assessment during lessons is usually at least good, recording what pupils have done against their targets, but in some instances is not up to date. Work with parents, in supporting pupils' learning through the IEPs, is excellent.

### **Curriculum and other activities**

#### **Grade: 2**

The curriculum has improved due to the hard work of senior staff, who have systematically modified it so that it is more suitable to the changing needs of the pupils. Increasingly, throughout the school, pupils have access to a wide range of creative and practical learning experiences emphasising basic skills, communication and personal and social development. The use of ICT has been significantly improved. Provision for pupils with ASD is outstanding. Many very effective activities, such as the Sports Partnership, extend pupils' interaction with mainstream pupils through pyramid sports days involving dance, cricket and multi-gym use, and lead to joint award presentations with the neighbouring Leek High School. These, together with a good range of visits and visitors, provide real-life learning experiences ensuring that

pupils are well prepared for the next stage of their education and beyond. Work in the wider community is not yet as well developed.

## **Care, guidance and support**

### **Grade: 1**

Pupils' care, welfare and support are a central priority and are outstanding. The excellent links with outside agencies, and particularly with parents, enable the school to make every effort to ensure that pupils' medical, personal, therapeutic and learning needs are met, ensuring that pupils are in the best possible position to learn and develop their personal skills. The school's role as a Key Learning Centre contributes well to this. The exemplary work done in partnership with the school nurse in creating role-play situations of life experiences provides the highest level of support for pupils. Parents are very positive about the school and feel they are extremely well informed about what is going on in school. Systems for ensuring pupils' safety are excellent and checks on staff are rigorous. There are very good processes for ensuring that pupils are guided and supported academically, particularly through the IEPs. Pupils are aware that they have targets, shared with parents, and there are good systems in place to help them to improve their work. Close monitoring of the progress of each pupil enables the school to support pupils' learning and prepare them well for their life after school.

## **Leadership and management**

### **Grade: 2**

The school's leaders and managers are effectively managing current changes while at the same time making sure that pupils sustain their good achievement and outstanding personal development. The acting headteacher and acting deputy headteacher work very well together and complement each other's strengths. They have maintained a very clear vision and direction for the school and have had an impact in a short time by reorganising staffing responsibilities, pairing classes to improve moderation processes, and creating an EYFS provision which is outstanding. As yet they have not had time to establish a monitoring role to ensure a consistently high quality of teaching across the school, although this is planned. Subject co-ordinators monitor the curriculum effectively, contributing to school improvement, and play a significant role in maintaining good standards of teaching and learning. The staff feel fully consulted, involved and valued. There are excellent procedures to support new staff. The school works particularly well in developing community cohesion through visits by members of the local community and its support for a school in Uganda, and is rightly planning to extend the opportunities for pupils to undertake work in the wider community. Governors work closely with senior staff and have maintained close liaison with the local authority working hard to develop and adapt provision to meet the changing remit of the school. Parents have full confidence in the school and its leadership, leading to the comment that 'Springfield School is the best on the planet.'



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**Annex A**

**Inspection judgements**

<b>Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate</b>	<b>School Overall</b>	<b>16-19</b>
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**Overall effectiveness**

<b>How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners?</b>	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

**Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage**

<b>How effective is the provision in meeting the needs of children in the EYFS?</b>	1	
How well do children in the EYFS achieve?	1	
How good are the overall personal development and well-being of the children in the EYFS?	1	
How effectively are children in the EYFS helped to learn and develop?	1	
How effectively is the welfare of children in the EYFS promoted?	1	
How effectively is provision in the EYFS led and managed?	1	

**Achievement and standards**

<b>How well do learners achieve?</b>	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/or disabilities make progress	2	2

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<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	2	
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	2	
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	2	

## The quality of provision

<b>How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of learners' needs?</b>	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?	1	1

## 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 eliminated	2	
How well does the school contribute to community cohesion?	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	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**

24 October 2008

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Springfield Community Special School, Leek ST13 6LQ

Thank you very much for being so kind to us when we visited you recently. We really enjoyed the chance to hear about all the exciting activities that you have done and we were impressed by how friendly you were. The most important thing to say is that you go to a good school and we agree with you that it is a happy place.

Here are some of the things I liked best about your school.

- You are very friendly and helpful and you enjoy coming to school very much. We know that because we could see the fun you had in lessons.
- You make good progress because you are taught well and you work hard.
- You eat lots of healthy fruit and vegetables and take part in lots of sport. Keep it up!
- You have lots of interesting things to do that help you learn.
- The staff make sure that you have lots of visits and fun activities.
- Everyone takes very good care of you so you are very safe in school.
- The headteacher and staff are working hard to make Springfield an even better place to be.

These are the things I have asked the school to do now to make it even better.

- Make sure that teachers use teaching assistants well so that you are always busy learning.
- Make sure that teachers know exactly what you can do, rather than just checking you have reached your targets.
- Give you more community work to do in the surrounding area.

You are very lucky to attend such a caring, happy school and we hope you go on trying hard. We wish you all good luck as the school changes to a primary school.

Graham Pirt Lead inspector