

Severndale

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	123634
Local Authority	Shropshire
Inspection number	340382
Inspection dates	7–8 July 2010
Reporting inspector	Jeffery Plumb

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

Type of school	Special
School category	Community special
Age range of pupils	2–19
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in the sixth form	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	303
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	46
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mrs Lin Hough
Headteacher	Mr Christopher Davies
Date of previous school inspection	7 March 2007
School address	Hearne Way Monkmoor Shrewsbury
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by four additional inspectors. They observed 20 lessons taught by 19 different teachers. Inspectors held meetings with two governors, staff focus groups and pupils. They analysed a wide range of evidence including: data on pupils' progress; curriculum planning; the school's improvement plan; pupils' work; safeguarding policies; care plans; three case studies of pupils experiencing difficult circumstances; and 83 questionnaire returns from parents and carers.

The inspection team reviewed many aspects of the school's work. It looked in detail at the following:

- the progress made by groups of pupils with different special educational needs and/or disabilities
- pupils' performance and whether the school had resolved what appeared to be underachievement in Key Stage 1, as based on the 2009 data describing pupils' performance
- the use of 'small-stepped' assessments to plan specific and relevant learning outcomes for pupils in lessons
- the impact of the school's extensive curricular specialist programmes to meet the needs of the different disability groups.

Information about the school

Severndale School provides for pupils with profound and multiple learning difficulties, severe learning difficulties, moderate learning difficulties and autistic spectrum disorders. It has an assessment Nursery with 33 part-time places for children, 27 of whom are currently undergoing statutory assessment. All of the other children, pupils and students within the school have a statement of special educational needs. There are significantly more boys than girls on roll. Almost all pupils are White British and very few are from families where English is not the first language. Pupils travel daily from all over Shropshire to attend this school. The proportion known to be eligible for free school meals is above the national average. There are seven looked after children. The school has recently been refurbished extensively, including some new building work. It is now located in a single building with extensive resources. The school has specialist status for communication and interaction. It also holds 'leading edge' status, offering support for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities in mainstream schools across Shropshire.

Inspection grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory, and 4 is inadequate

Please turn to the glossary for a description of the grades and inspection terms

Inspection judgements

Overall effectiveness: how good is the school?

1

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

1

Main findings

Severndale School provides an outstanding quality of education and care. Outstanding leadership from a passionate headteacher supported by a dedicated staff team ensures that every barrier to learning for pupils with disabilities is removed. Very effective, joined-up working between therapists and education staff, innovative and tailored curriculum plans for pupils, and the use of modified furniture and outstanding technology lie at the heart of the way the school removes obstacles to learning.

Pupils make good academic progress and achieve well. Specialist curriculum programmes, significantly, enhance pupils' communication and independence skills. By the time they leave school, sixth-form students have acquired the social and life skills to enable them to succeed at college in accordance with their capabilities. They enter the adult world with exceptionally well-developed college- and job-readiness skills. Pupils' adoption of a safe and healthy lifestyle is outstanding and they make a positive contribution to the community. Enterprise projects and physical education programmes are outstanding and make a very valuable contribution to pupils' work-related problem-solving skills and to their high level of physical fitness.

Teaching is good overall. There is a very considerable amount of outstanding practice. However, on exceptionally rare occasions, teaching lacks sufficient challenge for all pupils to achieve their very best and, in these instances, learning is slowed.

Arrangements for monitoring lessons are rigorous and make an exceptionally valuable contribution to targeted professional development for teachers, which, in turn, impacts very positively on raising pupils' achievement. Recent observations revealed a little inconsistency in the teaching of pupils with autism. This monitoring resulted in decisive action and all teachers, now, use the method adopted to support pupils with autism consistently in their development of communication skills.

Community work is a strong feature. The school has, very effectively, changed attitudes towards disability within the community and provided high-quality training to its business partners to support them in the development of pupils' communication skills when they are on work experience placements. Inclusion opportunities for pupils have brought enormous academic and social benefits for them, but also changed the attitude of mainstream pupils towards disability. At the start of the next academic year, the school has detailed plans to manage three satellite classes in a local mainstream secondary school, to maximise inclusion opportunities for its own pupils and, in addition, support pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities within the mainstream school.

Deeply reflective analysis of every aspect of its performance is a key feature in this

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school. Self-evaluation is used to prompt decisive action to bring about improvements. For example, data analysis in the summer of 2009 suggested that the achievement of pupils in Key Stage 1 lagged slightly behind that of other year groups. Decisive changes made since then have narrowed the achievement gap and, in 2010, pupils in Key Stage 1 made the same good academic progress as pupils in all the other key stages. Given the impressive success of actions to improve the quality of teaching and raise pupils' achievement, the school's capacity for sustained improvement is outstanding.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Raise pupils' achievement by ensuring that all teachers, consistently, plan suitably challenging activities to meet the needs of all pupils in their class.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils**1**

All groups of pupils make good progress in learning in lessons. Carefully planned activities, which are well matched to pupils' needs, ensure that the pupils make important, 'small-stepped' gains in communication and independence, lesson by lesson. Over time, their learning and development accelerate and their achievement is good. From very low starting points, pupils make good progress in English, mathematics, science and information and communication technology (ICT). In English lessons, careful positioning results in pupils with profound and multiple learning difficulties lifting their heads, gazing with their eyes and moving their fingers as they interact with adults. Every opportunity is used to develop these pupils' mathematical skills as, for example, in an outstanding rebound-therapy lesson where pupils, clearly, anticipated that they were going to bounce on the trampoline on the count of three. Pupils with severe learning difficulties communicate choices using pictures, symbols, electronic aids and vocalisation. They begin to understand that it is necessary to exchange money for goods when, in practical lessons, they go shopping. By the time they are ready to leave school, pupils with moderate learning difficulties begin to fill in an application form for a job and construct basic household budgets. Well developed ICT skills support pupils in controlling their learning across a wide range of subjects. For example, in drama, pupils with profound and multiple learning difficulties use switches to create a sound.

Pupils enjoy school, which is evidenced by their above-average attendance. They engage enthusiastically with learning and their behaviour is outstanding. Those pupils who spoke with inspectors say that they feel very safe at school and have an adult in whom they trust and can turn to with any problems. Pupils with intimate care needs have a say, through gesture and composed posture, about who it is they want to look after them. Pupils participate in an exceptionally extensive range of sports after school, which they understand make a very valuable contribution to their physical fitness. They know why it is important to eat healthy food. Through the three, vibrant school councils, pupils exercise their voice and make a valuable contribution to school improvement. They, willingly, within their capabilities, take on responsible jobs. Relevant work experience placements and outstanding enterprise projects equip pupils with skills for

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the future exceptionally well. Pupils, within their capabilities, reflect in the sensory garden. They gaze with fascination at bubbles and lift their heads and follow light lines with their eyes in the sensory room. They care for each other. Older pupils with moderate learning difficulties support pupils in other disability groups with their reading. Those able to communicate by e-mail keep in regular contact with pupils in a school in Uzbekistan.

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	2
Taking into account: Pupils' attainment ¹	*
The quality of pupils' learning and their progress	2
The quality of learning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress	2
The extent to which pupils feel safe	1
Pupils' behaviour	1
The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles	1
The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community	1
The extent to which pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	1
Taking into account: Pupils' attendance ¹	2
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1

How effective is the provision?

The vast majority of teaching is challenging, relevant to pupils' needs and, very successfully, engages their interest. Skilful behaviour management, particularly of pupils with autism, ensures that pupils are engaged with activities which accelerate their learning. Teaching methods vary according to the specific disability groups but, in almost every lesson, effective use is made of assessment to plan outcomes to meet

¹ The grades for attainment and attendance are: 1 is high; 2 is above average; 3 is broadly average; and 4 is low.

* In some special schools inspectors do not make a judgement about attainment in relation to expectations of the pupils' age.

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pupils' learning and personal needs. Consequently, pupils make good progress in the area of learning most important to them at that moment of time. The progress varies from lifting the head and using a switch to responding well to problem-solving activities in running a horticulture business. However, on extremely rare occasions in lessons, expectations are not high enough and this slows pupils' learning.

The curriculum is highly personalised and meets pupils' needs exceptionally well. Subject- and specific-disability expertise, combined with an extensive range of sophisticated electronic resources, enable the school to provide an exceptionally broad and relevant curriculum. Innovative practice in a few areas, particularly in 'total communication' and interaction, the school's specialism, is at the cutting edge. Such practice, significantly, benefits pupils' development of independent communication skills within the school and beyond, as a consequence of energetic outreach work. Physical education, the extensive extended-day programme, sensory programmes and real-life, business-enterprise projects ensure that each pupil experiences an outstanding curriculum. There is a wide range of accreditation opportunities and pupils are equipped with the life-skills required to face the world as confident and secure young adults.

Outstanding collaborative working and communication between health professionals and educational staff ensure that pupils' care needs are exceptionally well met. For example, therapists work ceaselessly to promote, as far as possible, pupils' independence in eating. Modifications to utensils, making pupils comfortable and the gradual introduction of new textures and tastes enable a few pupils to progress from being tube-fed, to taking pureed food, to managing soft-chopped food. Excellent care plans ensure that pupils' toileting and medical needs are met with dignity. Teachers and teaching assistants check that slings fit hoists properly when, for example, lifting pupils in and out of the hydrotherapy pool. Effective work is done with parents and carers in helping families to manage their children's complex behavioural, communication and medical needs. Pupils' induction into the school is excellent. Arrangements to support sixth-form students when they leave school are very good.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The quality of teaching	2
Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	2
The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships	1
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	1

How effective are leadership and management?

The headteacher, in partnership with an exceptionally effective staff team, promotes drive and ambition which focus on removing obstacles to learning for pupils with complex special educational needs and/or disabilities. By the time pupils leave school,

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they are equipped with the required skills, within the context of their capabilities, to succeed in the adult world. Monitoring of teaching is very robust and is used to effect change and raise pupils' achievement. Each specific disability group and looked after children achieve equally well, reflecting the school's total commitment to equality of opportunity. Disability is never accepted as a barrier to a pupil reaching his or her full potential. Leadership is shared and all leaders know and understand the responsibility they have to raise pupils' achievement. Outstandingly effective management systems and procedures ensure that pupils are safe and secure. Child protection procedures, at the time of the inspection, were extremely effective. Risk assessments, including those of pupils' behavioural and medical needs, are exceptionally detailed and thorough.

Partnerships with businesses provide work experience placements that are highly suitable for pupils' needs. Through an extremely effective partnership with a local secondary school, pupils in Years 7 and 8 access a well-planned design and technology programme alongside their mainstream peers. College links enhance the curriculum very significantly and funding from a local business has resulted in the school acquiring a piece of land to develop an orchard. Helpful workshops for parents and carers hone their skills in using signing to support their children's communication needs. The parent and carer support group for those whose children are autistic is greatly valued and beneficial.

Community cohesion is outstanding. An excellent action plan, set within the context of their capabilities and already evaluated, promotes comprehensive understanding among pupils of their local, as well as the national and global communities. Governance is outstanding. Highly knowledgeable and skilled governors provide very effective challenge and support to the school. In partnership with the headteacher, governors ensure that pupils within the school and those in mainstream schools in the community benefit from the school's specialism. Excellent training is provided to support staff across Shropshire in teaching pupils with communication difficulties and this, very significantly, benefits these pupils.

These are the grades for leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	1
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	1
The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met	1
The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers	2
The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being	1
The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	1
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	1

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The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	1
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	1

Early Years Foundation Stage

Children are placed in the Early Years Foundation Stage following an assessment in the on-site Children's Centre. 27 children are undergoing statutory assessment; the others have statements. Children's special educational needs and/or disabilities and associated challenging behaviours on entry are very complex. Children often start out with no behavioural boundaries, unable to play with friends and with limited or no speech. They make outstanding progress and, by the time they move from the Nursery to the Reception Year, their attention span has increased and their communication skills improved very significantly and they are far more independent. Some children who on entry had no speech, within a year, speak six- or seven-word sentences.

The curriculum, based on a 'plan, do and review' model, is outstanding as is the quality of teaching and care the children receive. Excellent use is made of a stimulating outdoor play area to support children's communication, mathematical and physical development skills. The staff team, regularly and frequently, assess children's development and, immediately, use the assessments to adjust their planning to accelerate children's development and learning. They encourage children to initiate their own learning by allowing them to follow their own interests. For example, a role-play area set out as a cafe was turned into a doctor's surgery by a child. Other children came into the surgery and the children developed their mathematical skills as they listened to each other's heart beat and counted each other's teeth. They explored a picture book showing parts of the body and talked about their feelings and experiences of hospital. This resulted in outstanding language and mathematical development and very significantly increased the children's knowledge and understanding of the world.

Leadership and management are outstanding. Partnership with parents and carers is a very strong feature. Parents and carers are involved in setting targets linked to significant developments for their children, such as drinking from a cup and independent toileting. Clever, joined-up working between school and home results in significant success in these areas. Examples of working in partnership include a favourite cup used by a child at school going home to support independent drinking, and Hindi words used at home to support 'potty training' being used in school. These strategies, significantly, enhance children's personal and social development.

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These are the grades for the Early Years Foundation Stage

Overall effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage	1
Taking into account:	
Outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage	1
The quality of provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage	1
The effectiveness of leadership and management of the Early Years Foundation Stage	1

Sixth form

Sixth-form students make good progress in their development of important life skills. They develop good, everyday living skills and are well prepared for the next stage of their education as they move to college. They go shopping and use the shopping lists they have compiled to purchase ingredients to prepare and cook meals. All students are included and progress, measured against their capabilities, is good. Those with profound and multiple learning difficulties experience the sound of coins placed into the till; those with severe learning difficulties hand over money and wait for change. They learn cause and effect from using switches to operate micro-wave ovens, washing machines and tumble driers. They participate in running a business within school and engage in problem-solving and decision-making activities. There are opportunities to gain nationally recognised qualifications. Constant review of the qualifications available is in place, to meet the needs of higher achievers currently in Key Stage 3 as they move through the school. The school has pioneered a range of accredited courses currently available to students at foundation level.

The quality of care and support is outstanding. Transition arrangements are carefully planned, involving students and their families fully in the process. Leadership and management are good and use self-evaluation effectively to plan and improve the provision further.

These are the grades for the sixth form

Overall effectiveness of the sixth form	2
Taking into account:	
Outcomes for students in the sixth form	2
The quality of provision in the sixth form	2
Leadership and management of the sixth form	2

Views of parents and carers

Returns from questionnaires indicate that the vast majority of parents and carers are pleased with all that the school achieves for their children. They submitted an extensive

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number of notes for inspectors, which were full of praise for the school. However, a very few parents and carers indicate that they are not happy with what the school does for them and their children. Inspectors agree with the many extremely positive views of the school. They did not find any whole-school deficiencies.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Severndale to complete a questionnaire about their views of the school.

In the questionnaire, parents and carers were asked to record how strongly they agreed with 13 statements about the school. The inspection team received 83 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 303 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	52	63	28	34	2	2	1	1
The school keeps my child safe	65	78	15	18	2	2	1	1
The school informs me about my child's progress	48	58	31	37	1	1	1	1
My child is making enough progress at this school	43	52	31	37	3	4	3	4
The teaching is good at this school	56	67	24	29	0	0	2	2
The school helps me to support my child's learning	46	55	31	37	3	4	3	4
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	52	63	27	33	0	0	1	1
The school makes sure that my child is well prepared for the future (for example changing year group, changing school, and for children who are finishing school, entering further or higher education, or entering employment)	41	49	35	42	2	2	2	2
The school meets my child's particular needs	54	65	22	27	4	5	2	2
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	43	52	32	39	2	2	2	2
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	45	54	30	36	5	6	3	4
The school is led and managed effectively	44	53	30	36	5	6	4	5
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	55	66	22	27	2	2	2	2

The table above summarises the responses that parents and carers made to each statement. The percentages indicate the proportion of parents and carers giving that response out of the total number of completed questionnaires. Where one or more parents and carers chose not to answer a particular question, the percentages will not add up to 100%.

Glossary

What inspection judgements mean

Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	These features are highly effective. An outstanding school provides exceptionally well for its pupils' needs.
Grade 2	Good	These are very positive features of a school. A school that is good is serving its pupils well.
Grade 3	Satisfactory	These features are of reasonable quality. A satisfactory school is providing adequately for its pupils.
Grade 4	Inadequate	These features are not of an acceptable standard. An inadequate school needs to make significant improvement in order to meet the needs of its pupils. Ofsted inspectors will make further visits until it improves.

Overall effectiveness of schools

Type of school	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Nursery schools	51	45	0	4
Primary schools	6	41	42	10
Secondary schools	8	34	44	14
Sixth forms	10	37	50	3
Special schools	32	38	25	5
Pupil referral units	12	43	31	14
All schools	9	40	40	10

New school inspection arrangements were introduced on 1 September 2009. This means that inspectors now make some additional judgements that were not made previously.

The data in the table above is for the period 1 September to 31 December 2009 and is the most recently published data available (see www.ofsted.gov.uk). Please note that the sample of schools inspected during the autumn term 2009 was not representative of all schools nationally, as weaker schools are inspected more frequently than good or outstanding schools.

Percentages are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100. Secondary school figures include those that have sixth forms, and sixth form figures include only the data specifically for sixth form inspection judgements.

Common terminology used by inspectors

Achievement:	the progress and success of a pupil in their learning, development or training.
Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
Capacity to improve:	the proven ability of the school to continue improving. Inspectors base this judgement on what the school has accomplished so far and on the quality of its systems to maintain improvement.
Leadership and management:	the contribution of all the staff with responsibilities, not just the headteacher, to identifying priorities, directing and motivating staff and running the school.
Learning:	how well pupils acquire knowledge, develop their understanding, learn and practise skills and are developing their competence as learners.
Overall effectiveness:	<p>inspectors form a judgement on a school's overall effectiveness based on the findings from their inspection of the school. The following judgements, in particular, influence what the overall effectiveness judgement will be.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">■ The school's capacity for sustained improvement.■ Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils.■ The quality of teaching.■ The extent to which the curriculum meets pupil's needs, including where relevant, through partnerships.■ The effectiveness of care, guidance and support.
Progress:	the rate at which pupils are learning in lessons and over longer periods of time. It is often measured by comparing the pupils' attainment at the end of a key stage with their attainment when they started.

This letter is provided for the school, parents and carers to share with their children. It describes Ofsted's main findings from the inspection of their school.



9 July 2010

Dear Pupils and Students

Inspection of Severndale, Shrewsbury, SY2 5SL

We enjoyed our recent visit to your outstanding school. Your school is exceptionally caring and meets your needs outstandingly well. The enterprise projects develop your work-related and problem-solving skills very well.

Here are the main things we found.

Almost all of your lessons are challenging, interesting and make learning fun for you as you gain in independence and improve your communication skills.

You have a curriculum which is planned to enable you to develop important life skills and equip you to become independent and confident young adults.

Excellent resources and special furniture and computers with switches and good teaching take away barriers to learning for you and ensure that you make good progress.

You enjoy school and your behaviour is excellent.

You understand the importance of keeping yourselves safe and healthy and look after each other exceptionally well.

Your headteacher and staff manage your school exceptionally well.

We have asked your headteacher to make sure that every lesson challenges you so that you always reach your full potential.

Yours sincerely

Jeffery Plumb

Lead inspector (on behalf of the inspection team)

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