

Kemball Special School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	124503
Local Authority	Stoke-On-Trent
Inspection number	340586
Inspection dates	9–10 February 2010
Reporting inspector	Terry McKenzie

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	3–16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	51
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mrs Hilary Gregory
Headteacher	Mrs Elizabeth Spooner
Date of previous school inspection	Not previously inspected
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by two additional inspectors. The inspectors spent about 50% of the time looking at learning. They visited 12 lessons, observed seven teachers, and held meetings with governors and staff. They observed the school's work, and looked at documentation relating to the curriculum, key policies and assessment information. Inspectors analysed the responses from the 24 questionnaires from parents and carers, 35 staff questionnaires and eight pupils' questionnaires.

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

- the impact of teaching and assessment on pupils' attainment and progress
- the impact of the curriculum on promoting future economic well-being and developing pupils' basic skills
- the effectiveness of leaders and managers in making changes and improvements
- how well the school cares for the pupils.

Information about the school

Kemball School educates pupils with statements of special educational need relating to profound and multiple learning difficulties and severe learning difficulties. A few pupils have additional learning difficulties, such as autism whilst most experience other forms of extreme communication problems. Pupils come from a wide range of backgrounds. Most are White British with around 12% from Asian and other heritages and a few have English as an additional language. A high proportion of pupils are entitled to free school meals and a small number are looked after by the local authority. Kemball has achieved the Healthy School's Award, the Sportsmark, the Activemark and has been awarded Eco School status for the last nine years. The school is due to relocate to new purpose-built premises in the next two years.

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?

2

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

2

Main findings

Kemball is a good and inclusive school that cares well for its pupils. The education is appropriate to meet pupils' range of learning difficulties. The school is appreciated by parents and valued by the local authority. Pupils are keen to come to school as often as they are able and demonstrate this by their good behaviour and positive attitudes.

The curriculum is planned well to provide each pupil with a clear pathway through school. It is appropriate to all levels of ability. Kemball emphasises the development of communication skills and prepares pupils well for moving on to the next stage in their education. Adults work hard to ensure that lessons are fresh and lively. They successfully make learning interesting for pupils and this helps all to engage and make good progress. Through the use of assessments teachers have a good understanding of pupils' individual abilities. However, teachers do not always direct classroom assistants to support pupils accurately to help them achieve the lesson targets. Pupils, therefore, do not always know what is expected of them during lessons and to what extent they are succeeding. Other resources such as computer technology and the school swimming pool are used effectively. Kemball encourages healthy and active lives and a good range of practical opportunities are presented through the curriculum. Pupils are supported and cared for in lessons so that, despite their difficulties, they become ready to learn as quickly as possible. This is achieved through the good use of mobility and communication aids. Signing is used effectively together with pictorial communication that supplements writing. One of the outside play areas used by the Early Years Foundation Stage children often becomes frozen and waterlogged. This limits the access that children have to outside play and learning.

The senior leaders communicate high expectations of staff and regularly review provision to ensure that it is appropriate. Thorough self-evaluation provides an accurate view of the school's strengths and where more improvement is needed. As a result of effective planning, the centralised system for assessment has improved since the last inspection and now enables the school to understand more accurately the rate of pupils' progress. Examples such as this contribute to the school's track record and confirm that it has good capacity to improve.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Ensure that teachers direct the work of classroom assistants more accurately so that pupils can make even better progress in lessons.
- Improve the outside play area in the Early Years Foundation Stage to enable children to experience more regular supported play outdoors.

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Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

2

Despite their difficulties pupils learn to make use of pictures and signing to communicate ideas and feelings. For example, they confidently use electronic communication aids such as push-button devices and touch screen computers to access the internet. They respond positively to the good opportunities that exist for shared experiences and they have opportunities planned into lessons for working as independently as they are able. In some lessons, pupils are able to work cooperatively. They share ideas together using the interactive whiteboard and express their interest verbally or through using communication aids.

Pupils make good progress from their starting points and they achieve well compared to pupils in other similar schools. More-able pupils begin to learn to read and write and all succeed in the Awards Scheme Development and Accreditation Network (ASDAN) courses before leaving school. Pupils undertake work experience with local employers and a few engage in college courses to supplement their school education. The most-able attend some lessons at another school to gain Entry Level qualifications. On leaving Kemball, almost all go into further education and last year no pupils were without education, training or employment. This is a remarkable achievement for a school of this nature.

Pupils willingly participate, as far as they can, in activities such as music, dance and drama. Almost all attend swimming lessons; for some exercise is undertaken in the classroom. Pupils relax with music and aromatherapy sessions and learn to control stress and anxiety. Their good behaviour demonstrated around the school and in lessons is supported by excellent relationships with staff. Where they can, pupils report that they feel safe in school and parents and carers agree. At lunchtime pupils make choices from healthy menus. Some become involved in the school council and help to make decisions about fundraising, whilst others undertake duties in class, such as preparing snacks. Attendance is average and any absence is due to medical reasons. Pupils are interested to learn about other faiths and their own spirituality through the curriculum, assemblies and celebrations of feast days from around the world.

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

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' 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	2
Pupils' behaviour	2
The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community	2
The extent to which pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	2
Taking into account: Pupils' attendance ¹	3
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2

How effective is the provision?

Teaching ranges from satisfactory to outstanding and overall it is good. Teachers collect a range of assessment information and use this effectively to ensure that tasks are well matched to pupils' levels of ability. Consequently, and because of smaller class sizes, teachers are better able to meet the needs of individuals than at the time of the previous inspection. Good levels of individual care for pupils with medical and other needs help them to spend as much time as possible in the classroom. However, teachers do not always fully indicate the nature of pupils' learning targets to classroom assistants. Consequently, pupils do not always receive the best support in lessons to help them achieve the learning outcomes planned for them. There are good opportunities for pupils to improve their skills in communication and numeracy during lessons across the curriculum. For example, a music lesson enabled pupils to practise counting during a song. New technologies, such as mobility devices and interactive whiteboards, are used well to help pupils access the curriculum and become ready to learn. Classrooms are bright and welcoming, thus pupils feel valued and important in the school.

The school ensures that the National Curriculum is tailored and modified to be inclusive and suitable for all pupils and there is an emphasis on ensuring that all receive personal, social and health education appropriate to their age and stage of development. Specialist provision exists for science and food technology and the wide range of partnerships employed for older pupils ensures that they benefit from regular opportunities to learn in other schools and colleges. The school cares for pupils well and supports them effectively. For example, good links are maintained with therapists and medical practitioners to ensure the well-being of pupils and children. Good strategies

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ensure that minimal time is lost in being out of school to attend meetings and treatments and this helps to maintain the good quality of education for pupils. Pupils of all ages take part in trips and visits such as to places of worship, museums and libraries.

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	2
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	2

How effective are leadership and management?

The senior team is stable and experienced. Managers ensure that systems are regularly reviewed and improved; they have an accurate view of the strengths and areas for development. For example, the assessment system introduced since the last inspection now provides better information about pupils' progress and is beginning to help teachers provide accurate learning targets. The school communicates regularly with parents and carers through daily diaries, newsletters and by making the school available to parents and carers one morning each week. Current written communications with parents and carers focus largely on aspects of care and medical need, but plans are in hand to provide academic reports to parents and carers each term. Good relationships are maintained with other local special schools and a college. Consequently, good opportunities are taken to widen the learning experiences of pupils and in return young people from elsewhere benefit from interacting with those at Kemball. Governors provide good support to the school. They challenge the headteacher as a critical friend and through their regular visits they know the staff and pupils well. There is appropriate attention to safeguarding, through ensuring that all checks, risk assessments and staff training are undertaken and safeguarding arrangements are regularly reviewed. The school promotes community cohesion satisfactorily. It has undertaken audits of the effectiveness of its work to promote community cohesion and has firm plans in place to help pupils understand more about other people in different communities. The school promotes equality of opportunity well and goes to great lengths to ensure that all pupils and their families are included in all aspects of school life. For example, a worker is employed to assist parents and carers for whom English is an additional language.

These are the grades for leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	2
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	2

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	
The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met	2
The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers	2
The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	2
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	3
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	3
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	2

Early Years Foundation Stage

Staff know and understand each child very well indeed. Satisfactory leadership ensures that good partnerships are maintained between staff, parents and other professionals involved in supporting the children's needs. In many respects, such as in developing attributes of communication, children's outcomes are good and the quality of teaching is good. However, outcomes and provision are satisfactory overall because learning opportunities are often too much aligned with the curriculum for older pupils. They are not always related closely enough to Early Years Foundation Stage. Consequently, whilst children are challenged to try new experiences and are set individual targets with clearly linked outcomes they miss some of the routine opportunities for experiences related to their development, such as regularly having the opportunity to learn outdoors. The indoor environment is well organised with high quality care and support. However, the balance between activities associated with play and those directed by adults is hindered by some aspects of the outside play area being of such poor quality that it cannot be used during wet or cold weather.

These are the grades for the Early Years Foundation Stage

Overall effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage	3
Taking into account:	
Outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage	3
The quality of provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage	3
The effectiveness of leadership and management of the Early Years Foundation Stage	3

Views of parents and carers

The questionnaires returned by parents and carers were overwhelmingly supportive of

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the school. A few questionnaires contained positive comments such as 'My child has made progress since attending this school'. This degree of support was reinforced through inspectors' casual conversations with parents at the start and end of the school day. Inspectors agree that this is a good school. While parents and carers agree that the home-school diaries are effective for transferring medical and care information a few rightly suggested that more could be done to improve communication between home and school with regard to academic progress.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Kemball Special School 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 24 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 51 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	16	67	7	29	0	0	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	20	83	4	17	0	0	0	0
The school informs me about my child's progress	17	71	4	17	2	8	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	14	58	9	38	1	4	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	16	67	7	29	1	4	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	14	58	9	38	1	4	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	15	63	8	33	1	4	0	0
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)	9	38	11	46	0	0	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	14	58	8	33	1	4	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	14	58	8	33	1	4	0	0
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	14	58	8	33	1	4	0	0
The school is led and managed effectively	14	58	9	38	1	4	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	15	63	5	21	2	8	0	0

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 inspected between September 2007 and July 2008

Type of school	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Nursery schools	39	58	3	0
Primary schools	13	50	33	4
Secondary schools	17	40	34	9
Sixth forms	18	43	37	2
Special schools	26	54	18	2
Pupil referral units	7	55	30	7
All schools	15	49	32	5

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 were reported in The Annual Report of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills 2007/08.

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.



11 February 2010

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Kemball Special School, Stoke-on-Trent, ST4 3NR

Thank you for making us so welcome when we visited to inspect your school recently. We very much enjoyed meeting you and seeing you at work in your classrooms and around the school. These are some of the things that we found out during the inspection from watching your lessons, talking with your teachers and reading comments from your parents and carers.

- You enjoy school and attend whenever you can.
- You make good progress in your learning at Kemball.
- You get on very well together and your behaviour is good.
- The school prepares you well for moving on to the next stage of your life.
- Your teachers work hard to plan interesting lessons.
- All of the adults look after you very well.
- The headteacher, managers and governors do a good job.

I have asked the teachers to think about how classroom assistants support your learning so that you can each receive the correct amount of help in lessons. This will enable you to make even more progress. I would also like the school to improve the outside area for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage so they have more opportunity to learn outdoors.

I wish you all the best for the future,

Yours sincerely,

Terry McKenzie

Lead Inspector

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