

Stone Hill School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	135547
Local Authority	Doncaster
Inspection number	341667
Inspection dates	18–19 January 2010
Reporting inspector	Rosemary Eaton

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	7–16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	115
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr Mike Gallafent
Headteacher	Mr Steven Leone
Date of previous school inspection	Not previously inspected
School address	Barnsley Road Scawsby Doncaster DN5 7UB
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by two additional inspectors. The inspectors spent four hours looking at learning in 14 lessons or part lessons, taught by 10 teachers. They held meetings with school leaders including the chair of governors, staff, and groups of pupils. They observed the school's work, and looked at safeguarding policies and records, assessments of pupils' progress, the school improvement plan and attendance data. The responses to 73 questionnaires from parents and carers were analysed.

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

- how successfully the school promotes good behaviour and attendance
- how well teachers meet the range of needs in each class group
- the extent and accuracy of school self-evaluation.

Information about the school

Stone Hill opened in September 2008, moving to a new building in January 2009. It caters for pupils with moderate learning difficulties and/or other special educational needs. All pupils have a statement of special educational need. Currently, around one in three pupils has autism. A number of pupils have experienced significant disruption in their education prior to joining the school. Most pupils are White British. At the time of the inspection, the local authority had recently placed two Key Stage 1 pupils temporarily in the school. They were being taught alongside the youngest Key Stage 2 pupils. The school offers outreach support to a number of mainstream schools with autistic pupils on roll. It has gained the Healthy School's award and Basic Skills Charter Marks for Primary and Secondary Schools.

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

In a short space of time, Stone Hill has established itself as a good school. This rate of development has been possible because staff share the headteacher's commitment to enable every pupil to gain as much as possible from their education. Its good capacity for sustained improvement is underpinned by leaders' accurate evaluations of the school's strengths and where further development is needed. The information gathered from monitoring activities is used to good effect. For example, support and advice for teachers, triggered by observations of lessons, have led to a close match between work set and pupils' particular needs. This strong feature of teaching is a key factor in the good progress made by all groups of pupils. However, pupils do not always know how well they are learning and what they need to do in order to improve. Their work is not consistently marked in a sufficiently precise and helpful manner.

Pupils feel safe in school and parents share their confidence. Learning mentors and strong links with a range of agencies and professionals help to ensure that all pupils, particularly the most vulnerable, receive the support they need. The good care the school takes of pupils extends to strenuous efforts to reduce absence. As a result, attendance has improved since the school opened and is now average overall. However, attendance in Key Stage 4 has not increased at the same rapid rate as in Key Stages 2 and 3 and is still not good enough. The curriculum meets pupils' needs well and supports their learning and personal development equally successfully. For example, work-related learning in Key Stage 4 offers opportunities for accreditation and helps prepare pupils well for their lives beyond school. Pupils learn a great deal about healthy lifestyles and are ready and willing to take on responsibilities and help others. Good behaviour means that lessons run smoothly and pupils can enjoy learning.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Ensure that attendance in Key Stage 4 increases to at least average.
- Improve the quality of marking so that it is consistently helpful to pupils.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

2

Pupils are confident learners. They appreciate the help and support provided by adults but respond well when encouraged to be independent. For instance, pupils in Key Stage 2 try hard to read unfamiliar words or tackle spellings, applying their growing knowledge of letter sounds. Pupils regularly support each other, for example, by being patient when others are struggling to put their ideas into words when answering questions.

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Occasionally, more vocal and able pupils can dominate discussions, forgetting to raise their hands so as to give everyone a chance to contribute. Pupils often work together particularly well when in small groups, as when Key Stage 3 pupils took turns during a mathematics game to reinforce their understanding of fractions. Most pupils consider, quite correctly, that they learn a lot during lessons.

Regular and accurate assessments of the levels at which pupils work show clearly that they make good progress overall towards the challenging targets set for them. Progress is often particularly striking in reading and among pupils with autism. By the time they leave at the end of Year 11, pupils have gained a range of accreditation including certificates in English and mathematics. Last year, a small number were successful in GCSE examinations in mathematics and science, mostly gaining grades B and C.

Owing to their special educational needs and personal circumstances, a small number of pupils sometimes find it hard to manage their own behaviour and need significant support. Though good overall, behaviour is often exemplary and the school is orderly and calm. Pupils are confident to report any behaviour that concerns them. More pupils than average choose to have a school dinner and they say how much they enjoy them. Many list physical activities, during lessons and leisure time, as favourites. They act as buddies, playground or sports' leaders, and school councillors. They distribute produce from the school garden to elderly residents and contribute generously to charities.

During an assembly, images of the devastation wreaked by the earthquake in Haiti prompted sensitive responses including a resolve to help the people. Attendance has improved from a low starting point last year, but some Key Stage 4 pupils are still too often absent unnecessarily. Their well developed social skills give pupils advantages in demanding situations, such as learning in the workplace or at college or during residential visits.

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

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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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 Taking into account: Pupils' attendance ¹	2
	3
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2

How effective is the provision?

Teachers plan lessons carefully. They make good use of their assessments of pupils' learning in order to adapt tasks to meet the wide range of needs in most classes. For example, in an English lesson, Year 11 pupils worked at varied activities to improve their writing skills. Less able pupils created simple sentences and those working at higher levels used conjunctions and adjectives to make their writing more engaging. Good account is also taken of pupils' interests and ages. In another English lesson, Key Stage 2 pupils were excited by photographs of themselves playing in the snow and were motivated to try hard to write interesting captions. Teaching assistants make consistently strong contributions to teaching and learning, for instance, by using their knowledge of pupils to help to manage their behaviour. Occasionally, the pace of learning slows, for example, when discussions are prolonged unduly or do not involve all pupils. There are some examples of highly effective marking, such as that of older pupils' coursework. Too often, however, pupils are not made aware of what they have done well and how they could do better.

The curriculum is well organised and pupils find it enjoyable. It is successfully matched to pupils' ages and special educational needs. Older pupils with autism follow a course that includes travelling on public transport, taking part in a conversation and shopping independently. Groups of pupils with problems related to issues such as balance and body awareness take part in 'movement groups' with exercises designed by the occupational therapist. Reading skills are promoted through a number of programmes and courses including individual tuition for identified pupils. In Key Stages 2 and 3, learning in different subjects is increasingly drawn together within topics, enabling pupils to apply skills and see the relevance of what they learn. Although much work in Key Stage 4 is accredited, this is not always at levels commensurate with pupils' ability or specific to particular subjects. Enrichment opportunities are many and varied. Visitors to school, including coaches and specialist teachers, and visits locally and further afield all extend pupils' horizons. Pupils benefit from lunchtime clubs choosing, for example, to play football, knit, learn the guitar, or sing in the choir.

The school works very hard to support all aspects of pupils' development. Staff know

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each pupil very well. This enables them, for example, to encourage particular individuals to try new foods and eat more healthily. Breakfast clubs provide a warm and welcoming start to the day as pupils enjoy the food and drink and chat with friends and staff. Particularly vulnerable pupils are identified and offered extensive and highly effective support, for example, through the work of learning mentors. 'I can talk about my problems now', one pupil remarked. Behaviour and attendance are tracked carefully and interventions are often very successful. However, although strategies to improve attendance in Key Stage 4 have been effective with some individuals, their overall impact is less strong. Pupils new to the school explain how staff help them to settle in and make friends. Older ones report that the school finds out what they are good at and encourages them to go to college in order to help them to get a job.

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?

Staff are hardworking and enthusiastic and report that they are proud to be members of the school. All those with leadership responsibilities fulfil their roles effectively and are constantly alert to opportunities to move the school forward, through comprehensive plans for improvement. Although assessment information is analysed rigorously to check that there is no underachievement by individuals or groups of pupils, performance in different subjects has not yet been compared in such detail. Governors bring experience and energy and have a systematic approach, prioritising tasks related to pupils' achievement and safety. Parents are given every encouragement to be partners in their children's education, for example, through membership of support groups or attendance at meetings, performances or social events. In addition to utilising support from other schools and a host of agencies, the school offers its expertise in autism, providing support to other schools and training for parents of young children with the condition. This forms part of the planned activities to promote community cohesion. Some elements of this aspect of its work are at an early stage of implementation, but there has not been time for the school to evaluate the impact of its contribution. The school gives high priority to ensuring all pupils have equal opportunities and takes effective steps to ensure no groups are disadvantaged. For instance, girls have access to football coaching by women professionals, matching that offered to boys. Stone Hill adopts recommended good practice in the area of safeguarding with good quality staff training, including thorough induction procedures for those new to the school.

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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
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	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	3
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	2

Views of parents and carers

A high proportion of parents returned the questionnaire. Most were entirely positive about the school and inspectors agree that this is a good school. There was no evidence to support the very few negative opinions.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Stone Hill 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 inspectors received 73 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 115 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	38	52	34	47	0	0	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	60	82	12	16	0	0	0	0
The school informs me about my child's progress	51	70	20	27	1	1	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	45	62	26	36	1	1	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	58	79	12	16	0	0	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	52	71	19	26	1	1	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	53	73	19	26	0	0	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)	46	63	24	33	0	0	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	58	79	13	18	1	1	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	55	75	16	22	1	1	0	0
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	48	66	22	30	2	3	0	0
The school is led and managed effectively	61	84	9	12	1	1	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	62	85	10	14	1	1	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.



20 January 2010

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Stone Hill School, Doncaster, DN5 7UB

Thank you for being so friendly, polite and helpful when we inspected your school. We very much enjoyed meeting you and seeing your lessons and other activities. Your new climbing wall looks magnificent and I could see how hard you had to concentrate when you used it. Special thanks go to the pupils who attended meetings with inspectors. You are a real credit to your school.

We agree with you and your parents. Stone Hill is a good school. Here are some of the things that impressed us most:

- you make good progress in your learning and the oldest pupils get certificates and awards. This is because you have good teaching
- you help each other and the staff and care about other people
- you feel safe in school, because you are cared for well, and you know how to be healthy
- staff make sure you have plenty of interesting activities, visits, visitors and clubs
- your headteacher and the other leaders do a good job.

To make the school even better, we have asked the school to make sure that:

- some pupils in Year 10 and Year 11 attend school more regularly
- your books are always marked helpfully, so you know how well you are doing and how you can improve your work. You can help by following the advice you are given.

We send each of you and all the adults in school our very best wishes for the future.

Yours sincerely

Mrs Rosemary Eaton

On behalf of the inspection team

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