

Fountaindale School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	122947
Local Authority	Nottinghamshire
Inspection number	314436
Inspection dates	3–4 March 2008
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	3–19
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	70
6th form	0
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mrs Carol Knowles
Headteacher	Mr Mark Dengel
Date of previous school inspection	31 January 2005
School address	Nottingham Road Mansfield Nottinghamshire NG18 5BA
Telephone number	01623 792671
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Age group	3–19
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

This is a school for pupils with physical disabilities. Many pupils have additional learning difficulties and/or disabilities including complex medical conditions, speech and language difficulties, sensory impairments, and moderate, severe and profound and multiple learning difficulties. All pupils have a statement of special educational need. The nature of pupils' learning difficulties and/or disabilities means that they are working at levels much lower than most pupils of the same age in mainstream schools. Almost all pupils are White British. Pupils travel to the school from throughout Nottinghamshire and from some neighbouring authorities. Ten pupils are dual registered. Fountaindale manages the support of these pupils in their mainstream schools. The school operates the county's Physical Disability Support Service. This provides advice, support and training to mainstream schools with pupils with physical disabilities on roll. The school's sixth form is known as the post-16 department. In September 2007, the school became a specialist school in the area of sensory and physical needs. It gained Investors in People status in 2000 and successfully gained reaccreditation in 2003 and 2006. The school has residential facilities that operate for two nights per week. Twelve pupils board for one or two nights per week in order to further develop communication and/or mobility skills. At the time of the inspection, the residential element was not registered with Ofsted's Children's Directorate and had not had a social care inspection.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

This is a good school. It has some outstanding features, which include pupils' personal development and well-being. 'We're like a big happy family' announced one pupil and another commented that 'the staff are our friends'. The excellent relationships between adults and pupils are key factors in the immense pleasure pupils display from the moment they arrive each day. At the end of one lesson, staff sang to Year 5 and 6 pupils 'It was great to have you here'. It was quite evident that this sentiment was totally genuine. The good quality curriculum injects lots of fun into school life. For example, pupils enjoy lessons such as art and music and getting out and about, including residential stays in this country and abroad. Physical activities feature very prominently on timetables. Their popularity indicates pupils' very keen awareness of the importance of exercise to their health and well-being. For example, pupils in Years 10 and 11 who had opted to take part in wheelchair dancing worked very hard to improve their arm movements.

Pupils are always ready to laugh and joke but their behaviour is exceptionally good. The great respect shown to them by staff is reflected in pupils' relationships with each other. For instance, staff are infinitely patient when pupils with significant communication difficulties are trying to respond to questions. Other class members follow these examples and never display irritation with their friends. Staff give helpful advice to pupils learning to manoeuvre wheelchairs, but don't rush them. All pupils are expected to be as independent as possible. This is an important aspect of the outstanding quality of care, guidance and support the school provides. Leaders and staff leave no stone unturned in their efforts to keep pupils safe and healthy. Education and health care staff work in close partnership to agree and implement approaches and programmes to care for each individual. As a result, pupils are comfortable and confident and hence play a full part in lessons and activities.

Pupils make good progress and achieve well in their work. This is the outcome of equally good teaching and learning. Staff know pupils very well and tailor lessons carefully to meet their individual needs. Pupils find writing particularly difficult. They tend to make slowest progress and reach lower levels in writing than in other aspects of their work. Pupils in Years 10 and 11 do not have their good achievement accredited enough. This year sees an increase in accredited courses for higher attaining pupils but not for those with more severe and complex learning difficulties.

Leadership and management are good overall but the headteacher and deputy headteacher make up an outstanding senior leadership team. They ensure that the school's drive for improvement is very strong and ambitious. For example, the achievement of specialist school status is already starting to have an impact on what the school provides, both for its own pupils and for others with physical disabilities in mainstream schools. The preparation for initiatives and changes is very thorough and is based on rigorous systems to monitor the school's performance. This attention to detail has led to good improvement since the previous inspection and helped to give the school its equally good capacity to continue to move forward.

Effectiveness of the sixth form

Grade: 2

Post-16 students achieve well, reflecting good quality of teaching and learning. Last year, only a very few students gained GCSE passes in English and information and communication

technology (ICT) and at Entry level in science. No other accreditation was available to these pupils. However, the new department leader has introduced a range of different courses since September 2006. Currently, all students are on track to achieve at least one award by the end of this academic year, covering many aspects of their work. For example, the Award Scheme Development and Accreditation Network (ASDAN) Towards Independence award is relevant to many students' needs. Work-related learning is another growing strength of the good quality curriculum. Students especially enjoy enterprise activities, during which they make and market a variety of high quality items such as greetings cards. Activities like this ensure that students' personal development is outstanding. They mature into confident young men and women, ready for the next stage in their education. The department is led and managed very well and developments are taking place continuously, for example, to increase links with mainstream providers.

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 1

Children make exceptional progress, sometimes amazing parents with what they achieve, particularly in personal, social and emotional development. Teaching and learning are outstanding. The teacher works closely with therapists to provide children with an excellent balance of structured programmes and opportunities to learn through play. Children have such fun. For example, during a 'working with the speech and language therapist' session, each child chose a toy or activity for the class to enjoy. They made supreme efforts to communicate their intentions by reaching out or speaking, for instance, and were thrilled to wear an Easter hat and hear everyone sing them a special song. The outdoor area is soon to be developed further but in the meantime children have plenty of other opportunities to play in the fresh air. For example, very well established links with a mainstream nursery enable children to explore a different environment and make new friends. The excellent arrangements to help children settle into the class are typical of the outstanding quality of care, guidance and support, very much appreciated by parents.

Effectiveness of boarding provision

Grade: 2

Grade for sixth form: 2

The boarding provision is good. It is not possible to evaluate the extent to which it meets the Department of Health's National Minimum Standards for residential special schools because there has not been a social care inspection. No recommendations were made in the previous Ofsted school inspection. Close links with parents, therapists and classroom staff ensure that pupils' needs are known very well to care staff. Individual pupils' care plans for moving them safely, for example, are implemented fully. Communication and mobility skills are encouraged consistently, for instance, during meal times. Pupils thoroughly enjoy their overnight stays. They like being with the staff and their friends and have fun during evening activities. The school is gradually updating the accommodation, for example, to incorporate more aids to pupils' independence.

What the school should do to improve further

- Improve achievement and standards in writing throughout the school.
- Increase the range of accreditation in Years 10 and 11 and within option courses at post-16, especially for lower attaining pupils in Years 10 and 11.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Grade for sixth form: 2

Pupils throughout the school reach a high proportion of their individual targets, indicating that they make good progress. The very small numbers in each year group and of pupils with different learning difficulties and/or disabilities make it hard to draw general conclusions. However, from teachers' assessments of pupils' learning it is clear that pupils develop most aspects of communication very well. Writing is a comparatively weak area of learning. The school is working hard to improve writing, for example, by identifying the best tools for each pupil to use. In most subjects, including English, boys and girls progress equally well. Last year's assessments showed that boys achieved less well in ICT and science. The school is keeping a close eye on boys' progress this year. Pupils with the most complex medical needs are helped to retain their skills for as long as possible. The school's targets for pupils to achieve, including those linked to its specialist status, are suitably challenging. It is too soon to judge progress towards these, although examination entries in Years 10 and 11 and at post-16 have already increased substantially.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

Grade for sixth form: 1

Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding. Pupils' excellent behaviour helps to ensure that everyone can enjoy their time in school. Those who are independently mobile are very sensitive to the needs of more vulnerable pupils, for example, in the dining room. Pupils work together very effectively when, for instance, taking part in dramatic performances or during enterprise activities. Pupils regularly raise funds to support good causes. Post-16 students organised an entertainment in aid of Macmillan nurses. The two school councils offer a formal way for pupils to contribute to the school community but pupils also help by carrying out day-to-day tasks in classrooms and around the school. Good attendance, very positive attitudes and experiences such as 'World of Work' week help to ensure that pupils are well prepared for their lives beyond school.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Grade for sixth form: 2

Pupils are quite certain that 'teachers help you learn'. They know this because teachers make sure that pupils understand the purpose of lessons and usually involve them in evaluations of how successful each has been. Praise and encouragement are used liberally, frequently prompting pupils to make huge physical efforts, for example, to communicate. Teachers take full advantage of opportunities to promote pupils' speaking and listening skills. Staff teamwork is very effective.

Teaching assistants invariably make very strong contributions to learning and the specialist expertise of therapists is often integral to lessons. Teachers choose activities and resources carefully in order to motivate pupils to learn. ICT is regularly used to very good effect. The school has noticed some anomalies in teachers' assessments of the P-levels or National

Curriculum levels reached, making it harder to track pupils' progress accurately. New arrangements to compare judgements are helping to improve the reliability of these assessments.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

Grade for sixth form: 2

The curriculum is adapted well to meet pupils' needs as they move up through the school. It largely caters equally well for pupils with different learning difficulties and/or disabilities, although accreditation for lower attaining pupils in Years 10 and 11 is under-used. The provision for pupils with the most complex needs is being developed through specialist school activities. For instance, specialist teaching assistants are establishing the best ways to help each of these pupils to learn. Work-related learning includes an exciting 'Task Force Challenge' week, requiring students from Year 10 onwards to take on simulated jobs, for example in catering or office work. There is a good range of high quality enrichment activities, enhancing learning and personal development. The residential accommodation is the base for popular after-school clubs on two evenings each week, open to non-residents also. At lunchtime, pupils enjoy socialising or attending clubs, for example to learn new signs.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 1

Grade for sixth form: 1

Pupils say that they feel safe and that 'there's always someone to talk to'. Government requirements for safeguarding are met in full. Child protection procedures are comprehensive and staff are well trained. The school carefully assesses and minimises potential risks associated, for example, with visits. Nursing staff handle medical issues efficiently. Because therapists are based in the school, liaison is very effective. Particularly vulnerable pupils, such as those going through difficult personal circumstances, are supported extremely sensitively. Individual education plans have recently become much easier for pupils to understand. Targets are constructed using straightforward language so pupils can be involved in evaluating their own progress. The Physical Disability Support Service is recognised nationally for its good practice and significantly benefits pupils in mainstream schools.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

Grade for sixth form: 2

The headteacher's responsibilities are especially demanding as they include management of the Physical Disability Support Service. Recent appointments and reorganisation of the school's leadership structure mean that some other leaders are still developing the skills needed for their new roles, such as analysing and utilising assessment information. The senior team has very good strategies for developing and delegating leadership. There are clear links between accurate self-evaluation and plans for moving the school forward, including through specialist school status. The specialist targets are challenging, especially those linked to the community. Disabled sports coaches are already having an impact in their work with pupils in partner primary schools. Governance is good. Governors are well informed, not least through the chair's energetic

and committed involvement in school life. The accommodation is old and inconvenient. Improvements are continually being made in an attempt to provide a more up-to-date learning environment.

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Inspection judgements

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

How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners?	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 effectiveness of the Foundation Stage	1	
The effectiveness of boarding provision	2	2
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	2	2

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	2	2
The standards ¹ 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 disabilities make progress	2	

Personal development and well-being

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	1	1
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1	
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	1	
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	1	
How well 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

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	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

¹ 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.

Annex A

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	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 tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	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	

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

05 March 2008

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Fountaindale School, Mansfield, NG18 5BA

Thank you for being so friendly and helpful when we visited your school and for making our short time with you so enjoyable. This letter is to tell you what we found out about Fountaindale. It is a good school and it has some outstanding things about it.

You told us how much you enjoy school and we could see that you have lots of fun. We were very impressed by your excellent behaviour and how well you look out for each other. You know a great deal about keeping safe and healthy. Altogether, your personal development is outstanding. The staff take enormous care of you and this is why you feel so safe in school. The therapists help to make sure you each have the right sort of help.

You learn a lot because teaching is good in your school. The teachers work hard to find work that suits each one of you. They know that you find writing very difficult. We have asked them to find ways to help you improve and we know that you will do your best to follow their advice.

Up to now, the oldest pupils and the post-16 students have not gained many certificates to show how much progress they have made. This is improving but we want the school to organise more courses so that every pupil can get awards.

Your headteacher and the staff keep finding ways to make your school even better, because they want you all to learn as much as possible. We want to send the staff and each one of you our very best wishes for the future.

Yours sincerely

Rosemary Eaton

Lead inspector