

Inspection of Fountaindale School

Nottingham Road, Mansfield, Nottinghamshire NG18 5BA

Inspection dates: 4–5 February 2020

Overall effectiveness

Inadequate

The quality of education

Requires improvement

Behaviour and attitudes

Good

Personal development

Good

Leadership and management

Inadequate

Early years provision

Requires improvement

Sixth-form provision

Requires improvement

Previous inspection grade

Outstanding

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils enjoy coming to this school. One parent told us, 'My child waits by the front door in the morning because she wants to go!'

The dedicated staff have high expectations. They are determined that all pupils will 'dream, believe and achieve'. Pupils behave very well and try their best. They like being rewarded with merit points. Pupils respect each other. Bullying is extremely rare. There are many adults to help pupils should they need extra support. Relationships between adults and pupils are warm and positive. Staff know pupils and their families very well.

Pupils benefit from the therapy on offer, such as the sensory hydrotherapy pool and physiotherapy. They respond positively to the many sensory experiences. Staff care for pupils' complex medical needs well.

Pupils enjoy various activities such as the weekly disco and trips. They recently performed with the Halle Orchestra, had a winter Olympics and played table cricket at Lord's cricket ground. Some pupils like learning German.

Pupils say that they feel safe. However, staff do not consistently follow the school's safeguarding policies and procedures.

What does the school do well and what does it need to do better?

Leaders have a clear vision for what they want pupils to achieve. They have developed a new curriculum this year. Pupils study the curriculum (pre-formal, semi-formal or formal) that best meets their stage of development. Some pupils receive a curriculum bespoke to their individual needs. The new curriculum is in the early stages of development. Not all aspects of the curriculum are well sequenced or delivered. Staff do not always ensure that learning is demanding enough for pupils. On occasion, teachers are not clear about the purpose of the learning. Leaders have plans in place to address these weaknesses. Staff need training to ensure that they are all confident to deliver the curriculum effectively.

The teaching of early reading and phonics is a strength. Staff read and sing with pupils frequently. Teachers encourage pupils to understand characters' feelings. Pupils reading 'Dora the Explorer' enjoyed having their feet bathed in warm water as they read about Dora visiting a heated blue lagoon in Iceland.

Younger pupils enjoy the challenge of recognising and saying different letter sounds. Staff use a range of resources well to help pupils. Some pupils enjoy reading aloud. Their books are at the correct level of challenge.

Staff are skilled in providing pupils with sensory experiences. The electronic interactive studio enables pupils to experience a wide range of activities and places. The studio was recently transformed into a fun fair, for example.

Pupils have good attitudes to school. They try hard in a range of activities and are resilient. Pupils enjoy chopping ingredients to make soup and collecting and returning the ball when playing indoor rounders.

Pupils are being prepared well for life in modern Britain. They have a good understanding of democracy through the elected school council. They understand how to eat a healthy diet and how to stay safe, especially when playing online games. In mathematics, pupils learn how to read and use bus and train timetables accurately.

Children in the early years receive a mixture of the pre-formal and semi-formal curriculum. The curriculum helps children to make relationships and improve their communication and listening skills. They enjoy exploring different materials and musical instruments. There are many opportunities to listen to stories and songs. Staff have a clear system for checking children's learning and setting realistic next steps. The well-resourced outdoor area promotes children's physical development well. Children quickly form trusting relationships with the staff.

Many pupils stay at the school until the age of 18. Students study a mixture of the pre-formal, semi-formal and formal curriculum, depending on their individual abilities. Recently, students studying the formal curriculum gained GCSE and functional skills qualifications in English and mathematics. Students enjoy coming to the school and have good attendance. Staff encourage them to describe how they feel. This helps staff to support students' well-being.

Senior leaders are new to their roles. They have made some improvements. They have introduced new systems and processes, including staff appraisals. They have improved the arrangements for fire safety. Leaders know what the school's current weaknesses are. Parents and carers are extremely supportive of the school and would recommend it to others.

Members of the governing body do not fulfil their roles and responsibilities well. Some governors have too many responsibilities and some have none. They do not hold the leaders to account.

The programme for careers education, advice and guidance is in its infancy. Pupils are not fully aware of the wider opportunities available to them once they leave. Despite this, some pupils have gone on to appropriate courses at nearby colleges.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are not effective.

Safeguarding concerns are not always recorded accurately. Some concerns are not recorded at all. Staff do not use the school's safeguarding policies and procedures well enough. Staff are not always appropriately trained to meet the needs of pupils. Staff do not consistently have all the necessary information before pupils start at the school. They are worried about this. They cannot care for pupils as well as they would like to.

Staff have received safeguarding training and are aware of statutory safeguarding guidance.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Staff do not consistently implement the school's safeguarding policies and procedures. Records of safeguarding concerns are not always detailed enough. Some concerns are not recorded at all. It is not always clear what actions have been taken in response to a concern. Consequently, leaders do not have a full picture of individual pupils' well-being. Leaders must ensure that all staff record any safeguarding concerns thoroughly, including any further actions that have been taken in response.
- Staff do not always have the necessary training or paperwork to give pupils the best possible care. For example, moving and handling plans are not always present or up to date. Leaders should ensure that staff know how best to cater for pupils' needs before a pupil starts at the school.
- The governing body does not fulfil its roles and responsibilities. Governors do not hold senior leaders to account for their actions. They have only recently become aware of the fall in standards since the previous inspection. Some governors have far too many responsibilities, while others do not have any. Leaders should ensure that governors know how to discharge their duties effectively.
- The new curriculum is in the early stages of development. Leaders have set out their intentions for the curriculum. However, staff have not yet had the training to implement this curriculum effectively. The curriculum is not consistently well sequenced or implemented. Leaders should ensure that staff know how to implement the curriculum effectively in all classes.
- Pupils do not receive a coherent and well-planned programme of careers education, advice and guidance. This limits their knowledge of future training, careers and options. Leaders should ensure that an effective careers advice and guidance programme is in place for all pupils to make informed choices about their future destinations.

How can I feed back my views?

You can use [Ofsted Parent View](#) to give Ofsted your opinion on your child's school, or to find out what other parents and carers think. We use Ofsted Parent View information when deciding which schools to inspect, when to inspect them and as part of their inspection.

The Department for Education has further [guidance](#) on how to complain about a school.

If you are the school and you are not happy with the inspection or the report, you can [complain to Ofsted](#).

Further information

You can search for [published performance information](#) about the school.

In the report, '[disadvantaged pupils](#)' refers to those pupils who attract government pupil premium funding: pupils claiming free school meals at any point in the last six years and pupils in care or who left care through adoption or another formal route.

School details

Unique reference number	122947
Local authority	Nottinghamshire County Council
Inspection number	10144772
Type of school	Special
School category	Community special
Age range of pupils	3 to 18
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in sixth-form provision	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	77
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	12
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governing body	Elaine Jeffery
Headteacher	Jan Collins (Acting headteacher)
Website	www.fountaindale.notts.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	14–15 March 2017, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The local authority issued a warning notice to the school in July 2019. This stated: 'There has been a serious breakdown in the way the school is managed or governed.' It also stated: 'The safety of pupils or staff at the school is threatened.'
- As a result of the warning notice, the local authority installed an experienced, interim executive headteacher in September 2019. The interim executive headteacher works at the school for two days a week.
- The acting headteacher took up post in November 2019.
- The chair of the governing body took up the role in October 2019.

Information about this inspection

We carried out this inspection under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. We deemed the inspection a section 5 inspection under the same Act.

In accordance with section 44(2) of the Education Act 2005, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector is of the opinion that this school requires significant improvement, because it is performing significantly less well than it might in all the circumstances reasonably be expected to perform.

- We held various meetings with the interim executive headteacher, acting headteacher and vice-principal regarding the curriculum, the early years and the sixth form. Further meetings were held with staff and a telephone conversation was held with representatives of the local authority. We met with pupils and with parents.
- We looked closely at the quality of education in phonics and early reading and the pre-formal, semi-formal and formal curriculums. We talked with the curriculum leader, visited lessons, talked with pupils and with teachers, looked at pupils' work and listened to pupils read.
- The lead inspector met with the designated safeguarding leader, several members of staff and the safeguarding governor. The safeguarding policy, training records and records of safeguarding concerns were scrutinised.
- We examined a wide range of documentation, including the school development plan, the school's self-evaluation, curriculum plans and information relating to pupils' attendance and behaviour.

Inspection team

Peter Stonier, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

Jason Brooks

Ofsted Inspector

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