

# Inspection of Stubbin Wood School

Common Lane, Shirebrook, Mansfield, Derbyshire NG20 8QF

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Inspection dates:	15 and 16 July 2025
The quality of education	<b>Inadequate</b>
Behaviour and attitudes	<b>Requires improvement</b>
Personal development	<b>Requires improvement</b>
Leadership and management	<b>Inadequate</b>
Early years provision	<b>Requires improvement</b>
Sixth-form provision	<b>Inadequate</b>
Previous inspection grade	Good

The interim principal of this school is Mark Fairbrother. This school is part of TEAM Education Trust, which means other people in the trust also have responsibility for running the school. The trust is run by the chief executive officer (CEO), Sarah Baker, and overseen by a board of trustees, chaired by Ian Richard Lowe.

## **What is it like to attend this school?**

Stubbin Wood School does not provide a safe environment for pupils to learn. Staff work hard and care deeply about the children. However, ongoing uncertainty and frequent staff changes mean that some pupils do not get the support they need, for example during lunchtimes or when they require personal care. This compromises the quality of support provided for pupils' welfare and well-being.

The quality of education is not good enough. Across all phases, many pupils do not make the progress they should because the curriculum does not meet their needs. Some staff do not have the skills or expertise needed to fully support and facilitate effective learning. Despite this, many pupils enjoy school, and they form close relationships, particularly with the long-serving members of staff.

Many pupils behave well. They join in enthusiastically with activities that staff provide. However, some pupils use undesirable behaviour to communicate their needs, knowing that staff will have to respond. When staff can provide the support necessary, pupils settle quickly.

Many parents and carers, and staff, recognise the school's positive work more recently to develop relationships with them and their children. However, the school does not provide pupils with the education and care that they deserve.

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

The school's curriculum is too often shaped by inconsistency rather than intentional planning. It is often unclear what pupils are expected to learn in each phase or 'pathway'. Staff often lack clarity around expectations, including what content to cover, when to deliver it and the appropriate approaches to use. Most staff do not know how best to support pupils' communication needs. The school does not check closely that the curriculum is being taught as intended or check when pupils are not achieving well enough. Pupils' experiences of the curriculum are often poor. While the school has started to re-think its approach to the curriculum, this work is only in the very early planning stages. As a result, pupils often do not have the opportunity to learn or achieve well.

In the sixth form, students experience a curriculum that is poorly thought out and lacks clear intent. There are too few opportunities for them to learn essential life skills that prepare them for adulthood. Their needs are not considered carefully enough. As a result, they are not prepared well for their next steps in education, employment or training.

In the early years, the curriculum is inconsistent. While children in the Nursery Year benefit from a well-planned curriculum that is delivered effectively by skilled staff, this offer is not sustained through the provision. Reception-age children have a poor experience due to the lack of a structured curriculum tailored to their development and learning needs. Children do not secure the knowledge and skills to be ready for the next stage of their learning.

The school does not have a consistent approach to teaching early reading. Some pupils who struggle to decode text do not receive the support they need to become confident readers. This significantly hinders their ability to engage with and benefit from many other areas of the curriculum.

The school ensures that pupils' needs are identified precisely. However, these needs are often not met sufficiently well. Learning activities are frequently not matched closely to pupils' special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). Targets on pupils' education, health and care (EHC) plans are not used effectively to plan learning. The school's information to monitor pupils' progress against these targets is not updated routinely. In addition, the school does not review pupils' EHC plans in a timely manner to ensure that they reflect each pupil's circumstances accurately. This means that the school does not know how well each pupil is progressing.

The school has recently improved its approach to managing pupils' behaviour, resulting in reduced suspensions. Typically, pupils attend school well. However, the school does not use the information that it gathers about pupils' behaviour and attitudes as well as it could, for example to further reduce behaviour incidents.

Relationships across the school are mostly productive. Pupils form strong friendships with their peers built on 'kindness'. They describe themselves as a 'caring group of young people' who 'look out for each other'. Pupils learn about issues such as human rights, tolerance and equality. They enjoy activities such as trips to the shops to develop their confidence and independence. However, pupils' experiences of work-related learning vary considerably. Some pupils and students in the sixth form know too little about the options available to them when they leave school so that they can fulfil their future career aspirations.

A period of considerable staffing and leadership turbulence has adversely affected pupils' experience of school. Many staff lack the knowledge or experience necessary to carry out their roles effectively in this specialist setting. There is insufficient leadership capacity to support staff and bring about the wide range of changes needed to improve pupils' educational experiences and ensure that pupils are safe. Those responsible for the governance have not acted quickly enough to stem the decline in the school's quality of education and the care that pupils receive.

The school has not heeded the many concerns from parents and staff about pupil safety. Some staff do not feel able to raise concerns because they fear recrimination and blame. The school has not met its duty to provide suitable and safe provision for the highly vulnerable pupils in its care.

## **Safeguarding**

The arrangements for safeguarding are not effective.

The school does not have a robust safeguarding culture, where everyone appreciates that 'it could happen here'. There are significant weaknesses in the school's systems and

processes that place pupils at potential risk of harm. Staff are reluctant to raise general concerns about their own and pupils' welfare. As a result, pupils' and staff's safety and well-being are not assured. However, the school does respond swiftly to individual safeguarding concerns reported through its online system, ensuring that action is taken to keep these pupils safe.

During the inspection, a significant number of staff and parents expressed concerns about pupils' safety and well-being due to the high numbers of unskilled and inexperienced staff. The school has not taken prompt, proportionate action to resolve this ongoing issue.

The school has been too slow to address known risks relating to the school's sites. Checks to ensure that risk assessments are implemented effectively are not robust. Pupils' individual risk assessments are not amended promptly when significant changes occur, leaving them at risk.

Some pupils with complex communication needs are not taught or supported effectively so that they can ask for help. For example, visual symbols have been removed or covered up. This means that these pupils cannot express if they are at risk of harm.

The school's processes to recruit staff are not robust. It does not ensure that suitable checks are carried out and recorded accurately before staff start to work at the school. Similarly, the school's records of physical intervention lack rigour, including noting any first-aid required for those involved.

## **What does the school need to do to improve?**

### **(Information for the school and appropriate authority)**

- There are significant weaknesses in the school's safeguarding practices. This places pupils at potential risk of harm. The school must act urgently to prioritise the safety and well-being of all pupils and staff. It must ensure that there are sufficiently well-trained staff, up-to-date and accurate risk assessments, robust safer recruitment processes and effective recording of physical intervention.
- From the Reception Year to the sixth form, pupils often experience a curriculum offer that is poorly conceived, disjointed and lacks purpose. The school does not check systematically how well pupils learn and where they have gaps in their knowledge. As a result, the provision is failing to meet their needs fully. The school needs to ensure that the curriculum, including the sixth-form programme of study, is designed precisely and resourced sufficiently so that it meets the full range of pupils' needs and prepares them well for adulthood.
- The school's approach to teaching early reading is inconsistent. This means some pupils do not get better quickly enough at learning to read. This limits their ability to access other areas of the curriculum. The school needs to ensure that staff have the skills and expertise necessary to ensure that those pupils who are able, learn to read well.

- A minority of pupils in the school display challenging behaviours. When these pupils become distressed, some staff are not confident in managing this. The school needs to ensure that it provides appropriate support so that all staff feel confident to help pupils regulate their emotions and feelings.
- The school does not meet the requirements of the provider access legislation. This means that pupils, including students in the sixth form, are not prepared well enough for their next steps. The school must ensure that it develops a comprehensive careers education offer so that all the requirements of the provider access legislation are met.
- The school's systems to quality assure and evaluate the provision lack rigour. As a result, leaders do not have a secure understanding of what is working and what needs to improve. The school needs to ensure that leaders' actions to improve the school are informed by robust monitoring and tracking systems to check on the quality of the provision.
- Many staff and parents are concerned that their views about the school are not listened to or acted on. This affects staff's morale and parents' confidence in the provision that their children receive. The school needs to promote a culture that allows the views of all stakeholders to be expressed freely, listened to respectfully and responded to appropriately.
- Senior leaders and those responsible for governance lack the capacity required to swiftly resolve the ongoing and extensive issues that are affecting the school. This has led to a decline in the quality of education and care that pupils receive. The school should ensure that there is leadership capacity at all levels so that the necessary improvements are rapid and sustained.
- HMCI strongly recommends that the school does not seek to appoint early career teachers. The position regarding the appointment of early career teachers will be considered again during any monitoring inspection we carry out.

## 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 information from Ofsted Parent View 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.

## Further information

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

In the report, '[disadvantaged pupils](#)' is used to mean pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND); pupils who meet the [definition of children in need of help and protection](#); pupils receiving statutory local authority support from a social worker; and pupils who otherwise meet the criteria used for deciding the school's [pupil premium funding](#) (this includes pupils claiming free school meals at any point in the last six years,

looked after children (children in local authority care) and/or children who left care through adoption or another formal route).

## School details

<b>Unique reference number</b>	147627
<b>Local authority</b>	Derbyshire
<b>Inspection number</b>	10411671
<b>Type of school</b>	Special
<b>School category</b>	Academy special converter
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	2 to 19
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Gender of pupils in sixth-form provision</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	261
<b>Of which, number on roll in the sixth form</b>	37
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	Board of trustees
<b>Chair of trust</b>	Ian Richard Lowe
<b>CEO of the trust</b>	Sarah Baker
<b>Principal</b>	Mark Fairbrother (Interim principal)
<b>Website</b>	<a href="http://www.stubbinwood.teameducation.org">www.stubbinwood.teameducation.org</a>
<b>Dates of previous inspection</b>	10 and 11 May 2022, under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

## Information about this school

- Stubbin Wood is a special school for pupils between the ages of 2 and 19 years. The school provides for pupils who have severe or profound learning difficulties, as well as additional difficulties. These may include physical disabilities, complex medical needs, life-limiting conditions, speech and language difficulties, sensory impairments and under-developed social skills. All pupils have an EHC plan.
- The school operates over four sites across Nottinghamshire and Derbyshire.
- The interim principal took up their post in September 2024.
- The school does not use any alternative provision.

- The school does not meet the requirements of the provider access legislation, which requires schools to provide pupils in Years 8 to 13 with information and engagement about approved technical education qualifications and apprenticeships.

## Information about this inspection

The inspectors carried out this inspection under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. We deemed the inspection a graded (section 5) inspection under the same Act. During a graded inspection, we grade the school for each of our key judgements (quality of education; behaviour and attitudes; personal development; and leadership and management) and for any relevant provision judgement (early years and/or sixth form provision). Schools receiving a graded inspection from September 2024 will not be given an overall effectiveness grade.

In accordance with section 44(1) of the Education Act 2005, His Majesty's Chief Inspector is of the opinion that this school requires special measures because it is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the persons responsible for leading, managing or governing the school are not demonstrating the capacity to secure the necessary improvement in the school.

- Inspections are a point-in-time evaluation about the quality of a school's education provision.
- Inspectors discussed any continued impact of the pandemic with the school and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- To evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding, inspectors: reviewed the single central record; took account of the views of leaders, staff, parents and pupils; and considered the extent to which the school has created an open and positive culture around safeguarding that puts pupils' interests first.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in the following subjects: early reading, communication, and personal, social and health education. For each deep dive, inspectors met with leaders, visited a sample of lessons, spoke with teachers, spoke to some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work.
- To further explore the effectiveness of the quality of education, inspectors reviewed the curriculum plans in other subjects.
- During the inspection, inspectors met with a range of leaders, including the interim principal, other members of the school's senior leadership team and the chief education and operations officer from the trust.
- The lead inspector held meetings with those responsible for governance, including the chair of trustees and the chair of governors.
- Inspectors spoke to a range of staff and considered the responses to Ofsted's staff survey.
- Inspectors met with some parents and considered the responses to Ofsted's online survey for parents, Ofsted Parent View.

- Inspectors spoke with a range of pupils and considered the results of Ofsted’s pupil survey. Inspectors spent time with pupils at social times to observe their behaviour and spoke with pupils about their experiences of school. Inspectors also observed the start-of-school-day routines.
- Inspectors reviewed a range of documents and records linked to attendance and behaviour, as well as school improvement documents and minutes of governing body meetings.

### **Inspection team**

Anne Maingay, lead inspector	His Majesty’s Inspector
Christine Watkins	His Majesty’s Inspector
Deborah Mosley	His Majesty’s Inspector
Matthew Rooney	Ofsted Inspector
Rachel Tordoff	His Majesty’s Inspector
Nyree Parker	His Majesty’s Inspector

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