

# Uffculme School

## Inspection report

---

<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	103605
<b>Local Authority</b>	Birmingham
<b>Inspection number</b>	336112
<b>Inspection dates</b>	1–2 February 2010
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	Alan Dobbins

This inspection of the school was carried out under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

---

<b>Type of school</b>	Special
<b>School category</b>	Community special
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	3–12
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	115
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Mrs Elizabeth Garnham
<b>Headteacher</b>	Mr Alexander MacDonald
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	14 June 2007
<b>School address</b>	Queensbridge Road Birmingham West Midlands
<b>Telephone number</b>	0121 4645250
<b>Fax number</b>	0121 4422207
<b>Email address</b>	enquiry@uffculme.bham.sch.uk

---

---

The Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted) regulates and inspects to achieve excellence in the care of children and young people, and in education and skills for learners of all ages. It regulates and inspects childcare and children's social care, and inspects the Children and Family Court Advisory Support Service (Cafcass), schools, colleges, initial teacher training, work-based learning and skills training, adult and community learning, and education and training in prisons and other secure establishments. It rates council children's services, and inspects services for looked after children, safeguarding and child protection.

Further copies of this report are obtainable from the school. Under the Education Act 2005, the school must provide a copy of this report free of charge to certain categories of people. A charge not exceeding the full cost of reproduction may be made for any other copies supplied.

If you would like a copy of this document in a different format, such as large print or Braille, please telephone 08456 404045, or email [enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk](mailto:enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk).

You may copy all or parts of this document for non-commercial educational purposes, as long as you give details of the source and date of publication and do not alter the documentation in any way.

Royal Exchange Buildings  
St Ann's Square  
Manchester M2 7LA

T: 08456 404045

Textphone: 0161 618 8524

E: [enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk](mailto:enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk)

W: [www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk)

© Crown copyright 2010

## Introduction

This inspection was carried out by two additional inspectors. The inspectors spent 60% of their time looking at learning, saw 11 lessons in whole or in part, observed 11 members of staff, held meetings with governors, staff and groups of pupils. They looked at data the school has on pupils, analysed reports from the school improvement officer and spoke with the school's local authority Transforming Education Officer. They scrutinised 76 responses to parental questionnaires.

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

- how well teaching helps all pupils with their learning and the development of their communication and personal and social skills
- how well pupils achieve in comparison with equivalent pupils in other schools
- how effective leaders are in monitoring and evaluating improvement in the school, especially teaching and learning.

## Information about the school

Uffculme is a special school for pupils with autistic spectrum disorders. Pupils come predominantly from the south of the City of Birmingham, including from adjacent local authorities. Increasingly, pupils are joining the school with more complex needs. Each pupil has a statement of special educational needs. Since the last inspection the age range has been extended and the school is now designated as an all age school. For the first time this year there are pupils in Year 7. Secondary aged pupils will be in temporary accommodation until the completion of the new building planned for 2013. The school holds the Leading Aspect, ActiveMark and the QualityMark awards.

**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?**

**1**

**The school's capacity for sustained improvement**

**1**

### Main findings

Uffculme is an outstanding school because pupils' communication and social and emotional needs are dealt with outstandingly well. They excel as learners and are very well prepared to be as independent as is possible in later life. Parents and carers are extremely happy with the school, saying, for example, "Uffculme is an amazing school with a totally dedicated staff. It has transformed our son's life. We are so grateful that he has a place there.'

The severity and complexity of pupils' special educational needs and/or disabilities means that, typically, they join the school with well below average attainment. Over their time at school they make outstanding progress against their targets. Although most remain below national expectations for their age as they move through the school, by the end of Year 6 a small minority catch up with expectations. Nationally derived figures on pupils' progress show the school to be amongst the very best of schools for pupils with equivalent learning difficulties and/or disabilities. This is because staff are expert at developing pupils' communication skills and settling their social and emotional needs as the first step to promoting learning and personal development. Teachers and teaching assistants have a clear knowledge of what their pupils know and can do. They are highly skilled in using specialist teaching approaches and augmentative communication procedures, such as signs, symbols and picture exchanges, in helping all pupils express themselves as fully as they possibly can as learners and as young people.

In a safe 'family' environment, pupils are looked after exceedingly well. Parents and carers are very appreciative of this, saying that they have peace of mind knowing their children are safe and happy at school, attend regularly and enjoy being there. Pupils' behaviour is excellent in lessons and throughout the school day; they make an important contribution to their learning by routinely working very hard to do their best. They are, rightly, very proud of the progress they make. They gain a good understanding of right and wrong, which they show as best they can when they have difficult choices to make, including those to do with staying safe and keeping healthy.

Senior leaders and governors know the school very well as the quality of school self evaluation is high. Pupils thrive because all staff are committed to making the school a safe place in which pupils have all that they need to achieve to their highest levels. Staff morale is high and the school is a happy place to work and to learn. Since the last inspection, senior leaders have improved the following aspects of the school beyond the high standards seen then: the quality of teaching; making more effective use of assessment information; and extending the range of pupils' learning experiences. As a consequence, the capacity for sustaining improvement is outstanding. The priority now is to add even more breadth and enrichment to pupils' learning experiences through the

**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

development of national and international partnerships.

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

- Develop more national and international links to share the knowledge, expertise and skills of the school and to broaden and enrich pupils' learning experiences.

## Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

**1**

In an extremely safe and supportive environment pupils flourish, both as learners and as young people who are gaining independence skills, as best they can. The very strong trusting and caring relationships they quickly develop with their teachers and teaching assistants make an important contribution to making them feel comfortable and confident as learners, and in helping develop communication and social skills and better control of their emotions. In lessons, pupils make outstanding progress against their learning objectives. By their excellent behaviour and, routinely, the strenuous efforts they make to work hard they show they enjoy their learning. This is so for all pupils, including those with the most complex needs and those who have the greatest difficulty in communicating their thoughts and feelings.

The well established routines, and individual work stations, provide the consistent framework for learning that most pupils require. As they develop in confidence, they relate more closely with each other. In a physical education lesson, pupils enjoyed taking a full part as a member of a team in competition against others. Teachers' effective use of the improved assessment procedures helps in planning lessons made up of tasks that, most of the time, are relevant to each pupil. As a result, all pupils make equivalently good progress against their targets for learning irrespective of the cause or severity of their special educational needs and/or disabilities. The positive impact of the ActiveMark and Healthy School awards helps pupils gain a clear awareness of the importance of staying healthy. They eagerly tell of the healthy foods they choose at lunch times and their enjoyment of the regular opportunities they have to be physically active, either through the curriculum, learning to swim, or by taking part in lunch time sports clubs. Pupils are proud to be members of the school council and of the decisions they have helped make, especially in choosing the charitable causes for support. They gain good awareness of the needs of the wider world through visitors to the school, especially those who return every two years from Uruguay, and from the residential visit to France.

*These are the grades for pupils' outcomes*

---

<sup>1</sup> The grades for attainment and attendance are: 1 is high; 2 is above average; 3 is broadly average; and 4 is low.

**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

<b>Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning</b>	<b>1</b>
Taking into account: Pupils' attainment <sup>1</sup>	4
The quality of pupils' learning and their progress	1
The quality of learning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress	1
<b>The extent to which pupils feel safe</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>Pupils' behaviour</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The extent to which pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being</b>	<b>1</b>
Taking into account: Pupils' attendance <sup>1</sup>	3
<b>The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development</b>	<b>1</b>

### How effective is the provision?

School records show that pupils are making outstanding progress in more lessons than at the time of the last inspection. Teachers and their assistants plan very well for individual learning and are expert at using specific strategies, such as the Treatment and Education of Communicationally Challenged Children (TEACCH) and adapted communication systems to ensure that the learning targets for each pupil are fully achieved. The generous ratio of adults to pupils, the guidance given by targets in individual education plans and in individual behaviour plans, the very well established routines, the individual work stations and the very good use of interactive white boards contribute to making lessons precise learning events for each pupil. The positive and supportive ethos clearly visible in all classes helps make pupils comfortable as learners and respected as individuals. Pupils know they will gain quick and effective help if they are stuck or troubled. They work hard to achieve their lesson objective. The superior rate of progress against equivalent pupils nationally is the natural outcome of detailed planning by a caring and committed staff team. Pupils routinely show that they have fully accepted their role as learners.

Pupils are learning what is right for them as the curriculum is successful in leading them towards independence. The highest attaining pupils are challenged to work at levels in the subjects that are expected for their age. The targets for learning for those with the most complex difficulties focus more directly on gaining increasing independence, for example in dressing themselves. Rightly, it focuses on promoting gains in communication skills and in personal and social development. Even in lessons in which the main focus is not English, there is a continuing emphasis on developing and

**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

extending pupils' communication skills. The regular opportunities for many, to meet with pupils from local schools are very effective in reinforcing emerging communication, personal and social skills. Last year, Year 6 pupils who visited France gained a good awareness of a different culture.

The systems for dealing with pupils' wide range of communication, emotional and health needs work outstandingly well, irrespective of the severity or complexity of the needs. The expert work of staff, sometimes guided by the advice of specialists, such as the speech therapists and those to do with vision and hearing impairment, help all pupils thrive as learners and as growing young people. Parents and carers are thrilled with this, one saying of her son, 'They help him and keep him safe and give him extra support with his learning. I see how much they care for him and enjoy teaching him, and because of this he loves school so much.'

Parents and carers are fulsome in their praise of the school. They say they feel very well informed about how their children are doing in school and like the frequent telephone contacts, home-school books and regular meetings to discuss specific issues or to form new targets for learning. They are especially appreciative of the advice and support they gain on diverse matters, either informally when they approach staff or through the courses that are run specifically for them, for example in toilet training and in improving behaviour. Almost all parents and carers attend the annual review of their child's progress and many are fully involved in continuing the work of the school in the home.

*These are the grades for the quality of provision*

<b>The quality of teaching</b>	<b>1</b>
Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	1
<b>The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>The effectiveness of care, guidance and support</b>	<b>1</b>

**How effective are leadership and management?**

There is much to admire in the running of the school. Senior leaders are a unified and dedicated team. They are very well supported by governors. Collectively they have guided improvement beyond the very high standards reported at the last inspection. At all times the focus is the pupil as an individual. Teaching is better and pupils are gaining a wider range of relevant learning experiences. Staff continue to be fully committed in supporting leaders in driving towards their goal of providing an exceptional, and continually developing school, in which all pupils irrespective of the genesis or severity of their needs prosper in their learning and in their progress toward becoming as independent as possible. Almost all parents and carers realise the considerable effect leaders have in continuing to drive improvements. The comment of one reflects the position of many, 'A really nurturing, positive and enabling environment has done

**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

wonders for our child. Thanks to all the staff and the headteacher in particular, whose presence is felt on a daily basis throughout the school.'

Safeguarding procedures meet requirements and they are rigorously applied across all areas of the school's work and routinely reviewed. Equality of opportunity is at the heart of the school's work and there is no discrimination of any sort. For example, the expertise of teachers and their assistants in using adapted communication strategies allows them to quickly recognise when pupils with the greatest difficulties in communicating are happy or troubled, and to provide access to their learning. Links with the local communities are clearly established, operate well and benefit the progress pupils make in their learning and in developing as young people. Parents report that the school is a cohesive community and inspectors agree with this. The community cohesion audit provides a clear analysis of the religious, ethnic and socio-economic context of the school. Information from the audit has been used well in guiding links with local community groups to the benefit of pupils' outstanding spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. They also agree with senior leaders who rightly recognise that the considerable expertise, knowledge and skills in teaching and dealing with pupils with autism should be made more available to others through national links and that staff and pupils would gain great benefit from operating more international links.

*These are the grades for leadership and management*

<b>The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement</b>	<b>1</b>
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	1
<b>The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money</b>	<b>1</b>

## Early Years Foundation Stage

Children, settle extremely well and quickly develop trusting relationships with staff, despite their high level of need. Outstanding teaching and care ensure that children



**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

thrive as learners. As they move through the Early Years Foundation Stage they make excellent progress against their targets in each of the learning areas and clearly show their emerging personalities.

Lesson planning is carefully informed by individual learning and behaviour plans, which means that learning is carefully and systematically targeted for each child. This helps children make great strides in gaining language, extending their communication abilities and in moving toward independence whatever the extent of their special educational needs and/or disabilities. The strong emphasis on communication and personal and social development prepares them well for later learning. Interesting activities hold their attention for increasingly longer periods, which helps them pay more attention to staff and to interact more positively with others. The indoor accommodation is cramped for the number of children and there is no covered outside area. Both act to limit the free flow of activities and the easy extension of learning into the outside environment. More often than not, careful planning means that learning is not compromised. Progress is easily recognised because of the good systems to monitor the learning journeys. The attention to safety and children's well-being is excellent. Relationships with families are strong and, by continuing the work of the school at home, many parents and carers make a positive contribution to their children's progress. Leadership is excellent, as is day-to-day management. The Early Years Foundation Stage provides children with an outstanding start in education and parents and carers are greatly appreciative of this.

*These are the grades for the Early Years Foundation Stage*

<b>Overall effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage</b>	<b>1</b>
Taking into account:	
Outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage	1
The quality of provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage	1
The effectiveness of leadership and management of the Early Years Foundation Stage	1

## Views of parents and carers

The high percentage of parents and carers who responded to the questionnaire were uniform in their praise for the school. Many of the comments on returned questionnaires told of their appreciation for the high quality of all aspects of the school, but especially the caring and respectful way in which their children are looked after. They are especially pleased that their children are enjoying school, that they feel safe there and that they are making good progress. They see teaching as being of high quality and judge leadership and management equivalently good. They are appreciative of the opportunities they have to be fully involved in the education of their children and are especially appreciative of the way in which they can always gain advice on matters to do with their children. Parents are overwhelmingly of the opinion that their children are safe at school. One questionnaire expressed concerns about how safe pupils were with

**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

regard to school procedures and equality of opportunity for all pupils. These have been shared with the headteacher, taking care not to identify any particular pupil or pupils. The inspection team recognises that incidents can happen but overall judged the school to be a place where the children are safe and secure.

### Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Uffculme 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 76 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	57	75	19	25	0	0	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	60	79	15	20	0	0	1	1
The school informs me about my child's progress	56	74	18	24	1	1	1	1
My child is making enough progress at this school	51	67	21	28	2	3	1	1
The teaching is good at this school	53	70	21	28	2	3	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	47	62	24	32	4	5	1	1
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	46	61	29	38	1	1	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)	41	55	28	37	2	3	1	1
The school meets my child's particular needs	58	76	16	21	1	1	1	1
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	51	68	20	27	1	1	1	1
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	54	71	19	25	2	3	1	1
The school is led and managed effectively	59	78	15	20	1	1	1	1
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	58	76	16	21	1	1	1	1

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"><li>■ The school's capacity for sustained improvement.</li><li>■ Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils.</li><li>■ The quality of teaching.</li><li>■ The extent to which the curriculum meets pupil's needs, including where relevant, through partnerships.</li><li>■ The effectiveness of care, guidance and support.</li></ul>
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.**



Wednesday 3 February 2010

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Uffculme School, West Midlands, B13 8QB

It was lovely for me and my colleague to meet and spend time with you when we visited your school. Thank you for making us so welcome. We found your school to be among the very best of schools. These are some of the things we especially liked:

- the outstanding progress you make in your learning and in becoming as independent as possible
- that you are safe and comfortable at school and cared for very well indeed
- the outstanding way in which you are taught what is right for you
- the exceptional way in which your headteacher and the other senior leaders provide everything you need at school to help you in your learning and in growing up
- that you know the importance of a healthy lifestyle and that most of you make healthy choices most of the time.

There is one thing I have asked the school to do to make it an even better place for you. I would like there to be more partnerships with other schools and other places in this country and abroad so that you can then gain benefit from opportunities that cannot be provided from within your school only.

You can help make your school even better by always behaving as well as you did over the time of our visit and by continuing to work hard all the time.

Thank you for helping us find out about your school. I will always have pleasant memories of you and your outstanding school.

Yours sincerely

Alan Dobbins

Lead inspector

**Any complaints about the inspection or the report should be made following the procedures set out in the guidance 'Complaining about inspections', which is available from Ofsted's website: [www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk). If you would like Ofsted to send you a copy of the guidance, please telephone 08456 404045, or email [enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk](mailto:enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk).**