

Woodlands School

Beechdale Road, Aspley, Nottingham, NG8 3EZ

Inspection dates 18–19 June 2013

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Satisfactory	3
	This inspection:	Inadequate	4
Achievement of pupils		Requires improvement	3
Quality of teaching		Requires improvement	3
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Inadequate	4
Leadership and management		Inadequate	4

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a school that requires special measures.

- The school does not adequately safeguard pupils because some classroom doors are locked inappropriately when pupils are within the room. The school does not check the whereabouts of those pupils who are carrying out school work at home as part of an alternative education package. At times, the staff's responses to low-level disruptive behaviour are unsuitable.
- Not enough teaching is good or better because time is wasted in lessons and some teachers do not adapt tasks to ensure all pupils achieve as much as they can.
- Pupils' achievement requires improvement particularly in the younger year groups. The expectation of what pupils can achieve is often too low.
- A few pupils do not behave in a safe way and staff are not supported to use suitable ways consistently to help the pupils' behaviour improve quickly enough.
- The detailed checking of information about pupils' progress does not reflect high enough expectations.
- Leaders do not ensure that all staff are aware of the national expectations of pupils' progress for those who are working at differing levels of understanding.
- Not all of the senior leadership team understand safeguarding requirements related to managing pupils' behaviour.

The school has the following strengths

- The subjects and qualifications available to pupils once they reach 14 years of age supports them well in developing skills required for their next stage of education, employment or training.
- The ways of improving teaching led by the executive headteacher have been successful so that no teaching is inadequate and over the last two years, an increasing amount has been good or better.
- School governors have helped the school to improve by taking action when there have been weaknesses in teaching and by rewarding strong performance.

Information about this inspection

- The inspector observed in 12 lessons; five were observed jointly with the headteacher. The inspector also heard some pupils read.
- Other observations included break and lunch times as well as the management of behaviour for pupils who were not in their lessons.
- Discussions were held informally with pupils and the inspector met with staff and representatives of the governing body and the local authority. In addition, she held a discussion with one of the managers of an alternative provider used by the school to enhance provision in Key Stage 4.
- The inspector looked at a range of documents including: pupils' progress data, results of any examinations and other qualifications, the school's self-evaluation, its monitoring of teaching, safeguarding information, minutes of governing body meetings, attendance and behaviour data, and reports from external providers.
- The inspector took into account the views expressed in staff questionnaires and the most recent parental survey carried out by the school, with around half the parents providing detailed responses. There was one response to the online questionnaire (Parent View).

Inspection team

Janet Thompson, Lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

Full report

In accordance with the Education Act 2005, Her 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.

The school may appoint newly qualified teachers if mentoring arrangements are overseen by the executive headteacher.

Information about this school

- This is a small special school for pupils with moderate learning difficulties, behavioural and emotional difficulties and pupils with autistic spectrum disorders. A small number of pupils have severe learning difficulties. All pupils have statements of special educational needs.
- There are more pupils in Years 8 to 11 than younger year groups. There were no pupils in Reception or Year 1 at the time of the inspection.
- The proportion of pupils for whom the school receives pupil premium funding is very high. This is extra government funding for pupils known to be eligible for free school meals, those in local authority care and those with a parent in the armed forces.
- Pupils attend the school from across the City of Nottingham. Most pupils are White British.
- The school is part of the Westbury Woodlands Federation which was established in September 2010 and the Federation Governing Body was established at this time.
- The school extends Key Stage 4 provision by using alternative education providers. The providers are all based in Nottingham and include Fuel, Nottingham Mencap, New College Nottingham and Learn Fit Academy.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve safeguarding by:
 - ensuring rooms are not locked when pupils are inside
 - ensuring all staff follow the protocols and procedures set out in the school's behaviour policy consistently, especially in relation to physical intervention and the scale of response to the type of behaviour
 - checking the whereabouts of those pupils doing school work at home and complying with the latest government advice on school attendance.
- Improve the quality of teaching and accelerate pupils' progress particularly in English and mathematics by ensuring all teachers:
 - have high expectations based upon accurate information about what pupils know already and the progress that is possible from different levels of skill and understanding
 - understand how to give enough challenge in the same lesson to different pupils working at different levels of understanding or who have different skills
 - make sure every minute counts for learning in lessons and offer opportunities for practising reading, writing and mathematics across subjects.
- Improve leadership and management by:
 - making sure all leaders understand safeguarding requirements related to pupils' behaviour and attendance and consistently communicate this to all staff
 - making sure the monitoring of pupils' progress includes comparisons with national data so that the school is secure in assessing whether pupils are making expected progress.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils requires improvement

- The progress pupils make has improved, particularly over the last year. More pupils are making the progress expected of them but only a few are exceeding those expectations.
- The progress pupils make in lessons is very variable and requires improvement so that all pupils achieve well.
- Recent analysis by the school shows that more pupils between the ages of 14 and 16 are making expected progress than in other year groups. Similarly, more pupils with autistic spectrum disorders are making expected or more than expected progress than other groups of pupils at the school. Use of information about pupils' progress is helping the school to target support in order to tackle the inequality in progress made by different groups of pupils. As a result, the progress of pupils with severe learning difficulties is improving relatively quickly.
- A change in approach for a few pupils who need very precise teaching and an environment that gives specific support for improving communication skills has successfully increased the progress they make.
- This year the school has used pupil premium funding to provide more specific support for reading and writing. This has been effective in increasing the progress made by the majority of eligible pupils, just over one third of whom are now making expected progress or better this academic year.
- Nearly all pupils achieve a qualification in English and over two thirds of the pupils achieve both an entry level certificate in English and entry level or GCSE in mathematics. The level of the qualifications achieved do not always reflect expected or better progress when the skills and knowledge pupils had when they started at the school are taken into account.
- Additional vocational qualifications offered to the pupils have enabled more of them to achieve skills in preparation for their chosen next stage in education, employment or training. This includes those pupils studying with alternative providers. The majority of pupils move on successfully to their next stage at the age of 16.

The quality of teaching requires improvement

- Teaching is variable and not enough is good or better to ensure all pupils achieve as well as they should. During the inspection, teaching seen varied between outstanding and that which required improvement.
- Teaching requires improvement because not all teachers make good use of the time available or adapt activities within a lesson to ensure all pupils are learning well.
- Pupils' work reflects the variation in the quality of teaching. There are still too many examples where work has not been completed, or where information about what pupils know already has not been used to make sure new work is challenging enough.
- Support to help teachers improve their skills, including sharing the best practice found across the federated schools, has been successful in eradicating inadequate teaching. Teachers' planning is usually thorough but expectations of what pupils can achieve are not consistently high enough

to raise teaching to good.

- The teaching of reading and writing has become more consistent over the last year both within classes and where pupils are given extra time and support. Many pupils enjoy reading. They are able to talk about their books and explain their choices and are using suitable approaches to read unfamiliar words. A small group of pupils is less keen to engage and finds reading difficult.
- Pupils respond best when the structure of the lesson is clear and familiar and where teachers adapt the activities in response to pupils' skills and knowledge shown in the lesson. In these lessons, there is a positive atmosphere and pupils are confident to try hard and seek help when required. Pupils enjoy lessons when teachers use practical approaches to learning while making sure there is enough challenge.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are inadequate

- A few pupils continue to show a poor attitude to learning even after being at the school for some time. At times, their behaviour is exacerbated by a lack of structure or focus in lessons and in these situations the resulting poor behaviour disrupts the learning of other pupils. This small group of pupils is not being supported well enough to improve their behaviour quickly.
- The school has not developed appropriate approaches to managing pupils who are at risk of running out of classrooms and staff resort to inappropriately locking doors.
- Not all staff apply the school's behaviour policy consistently and a few respond inappropriately to some behaviour from pupils. This prevents pupils from making the necessary progress in managing their own behaviour.
- The school's behaviour policy has well-defined, clear procedures and when staff comply with the policy, it is evidently effective. During the inspection, some very effective and legitimate support by staff to help pupils manage their own behaviour was observed, as well as some which was highly inappropriate.
- Pupils feel safe at school and parents' responses to the school's questionnaire agreed with this, although some of the practices observed by the inspector did not support this view.
- The school provides individual support, alongside specifically taught personal, social and health education, to help pupils learn how to develop positive relationships and to tackle any discrimination. This is usually effective and many pupils relate well with each other and with staff. There are a few who still find this difficult. Any use of discriminatory language is usually picked up by staff.
- There are pupils who have previously struggled to behave appropriately who make good progress in their ability to concentrate and learn. The number of incidents requiring staff to physically intervene with these pupils to prevent them from harming themselves or others reduces significantly over time at the school.
- The number of exclusions has reduced considerably over the last year and more staff have a wider repertoire of strategies they can use to support pupils.
- Pupils understand different forms of bullying including racist and homophobic bullying. Most feel able to tell someone if there is a problem but a few still perceive the need to deal with things themselves. Occurrences of bullying are low and the school is very quick to deal with any

reported concerns or incidents where pupils are trying to sort things out for themselves, and staff take effective action with all parties involved.

- Attendance across the school remains low but many pupils improve their attendance from previous levels prior to coming to the school in response to the support and checks carried out by staff.

The leadership and management are inadequate

- Leadership and management are inadequate because safeguarding is inadequate. The practice of routinely locking some classroom doors has been condoned by on-site leaders and has not been picked up by the governing body or the executive headteacher.
- Day-to-day leadership has not made sure all staff consistently use suitable responses to different behaviour so that the lowest level of intervention is used within any situation. While many staff are highly skilled at reducing confrontation and enabling pupils to return to their learning, there are some who create more conflict than is necessary and this is not addressed consistently by all leaders.
- The school inappropriately records pupils doing work at home as 'accessing off-site educational activity'. There is not enough supervision of work or any checks on the pupils' whereabouts during these sessions. There are good checks on the attendance of pupils at alternative providers and staff carry out regular visits.
- The monitoring of pupils' progress does not take into account expected rates of progress. This means that leaders record any progress as positive, shown with green highlighting. This can be misleading as it suggests good progress when some of these pupils have made less than expected progress. The monitoring of the academic progress made by pupils on alternative provision is limited although the evaluation of progress made in social skills and readiness to work and learn is more thorough.
- The school has rightly targeted pupil premium funding to help improve the literacy skills of pupils, recognising that this is one of the main barriers to their learning in other subjects. The progress made by the pupils in receipt of this additional support is being carefully monitored.
- Arrangements for working with other services regarding child protection issues outside school are well developed and staff are diligent in reporting concerns, and suitable action and follow up is taken by the school. Staff training in this area is up to date.
- There have been many improvements since the last inspection, particularly in teaching, the subjects offered to pupils and in behaviour management by some staff. However, not all senior leaders understand safeguarding and positive behaviour approaches well enough or demonstrate high enough expectations of pupils' progress and, consequently, the school's capacity to improve further is uncertain.
- The local authority provides a 'light touch' approach to the school as it has confidence in the increased leadership capacity created by the federation and executive headteacher. Some of the advice given about analysing pupils' achievement has been unclear and the school has not always used national expectations as a marker for evaluating the progress made by pupils.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - The governing body was unaware of the practices that have raised safeguarding concerns

during this inspection. Governors have recently carried out an audit of skills so that expertise can be used more effectively. This is a suitable response to increase capacity and offer greater challenge to the school so that the issues raised by this inspection can be picked up more readily.

- Statutory responsibilities are met regarding governor training for safeguarding including staff recruitment.
- The governing body works across two federated schools which have helped to share best practice with Woodlands. The governors have effectively supported the executive headteacher in taking action to eradicate inadequate teaching. This year, governors have introduced good performance management for teachers, based upon pupils' achievement.
- The governors are keenly aware of the need to promote better opportunities for the pupils. Some actions taken over the last two years have effectively supported school improvement, although the external monitoring commissioned by the school did not ensure there was an objective view of pupils' progress based on national expectations.
- The governors consider the progress made by different groups of pupils and have supported actions to increase the equality of outcomes for different pupils including the decisions on how the pupil premium funding is spent. The information provided to the governing body is not always in a style that ensures they can challenge leaders about how the progress made by pupils compares with national expectations.

What inspection judgements mean

School		
Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	An outstanding school is highly effective in delivering outcomes that provide exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs. This ensures that pupils are very well equipped for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 2	Good	A good school is effective in delivering outcomes that provide well for all its pupils' needs. Pupils are well prepared for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 3	Requires improvement	A school that requires improvement is not yet a good school, but it is not inadequate. This school will receive a full inspection within 24 months from the date of this inspection.
Grade 4	Inadequate	<p>A school that has serious weaknesses is inadequate overall and requires significant improvement but leadership and management are judged to be Grade 3 or better. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p> <p>A school that requires special measures is one where the school is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the school's leaders, managers or governors have not demonstrated that they have the capacity to secure the necessary improvement in the school. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p>

School details

Unique reference number	122962
Local authority	Nottingham City
Inspection number	402803

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	3–16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	56
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Sue Thornton
Headteacher	Carol Barker (Head of School) John Dyson (Executive Headteacher)
Date of previous school inspection	9 December 2009
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