

Woodlands School

Beechdale Road, Aspley, Nottingham, NG8 3EZ

Inspection dates 20–21 January 2014

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

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a school that requires improvement. It is not good because

- Too few pupils make good progress and their learning varies too widely from lesson to lesson.
- Qualifications achieved at age 16, especially in English and mathematics, do not always show that pupils have made sufficient progress from the levels they were at when they were younger.
- Too many lessons are still not good or better because teachers do not use information about what pupils can do well enough to adapt work so it is at the right level of difficulty.
- Teachers do not check effectively how well pupils are learning during lessons.
- Teachers do not help pupils enough to know how well they are doing or how they can do even better.
- Too many pupils attend school poorly.
- Information about pupils' progress and their behaviour is not combined well enough with information about the quality of teaching to identify and support improvements.
- Teachers' assessments of pupils' attainments are not checked rigorously to ensure leaders and governors have an accurate picture of the school's effectiveness.

The school has the following strengths

- Pupils who have social and communication difficulties make good progress.
- Pupils at risk of underachievement and for whom the school receive additional funding make as much progress as the other pupils.
- Staff consistently use the school's policy for improving behaviour and this successfully helps pupils manage their own behaviour.
- Pupils feel safe and know who to speak to if they have any worries.
- The curriculum meets the wide range of pupils' needs well and prepares them effectively for their next stage of education or training.
- Leaders have improved the quality of teaching through monitoring and training.

Information about this inspection

- The inspector observed eight lessons; seven were observed jointly with the headteacher. The inspectors heard some pupils read.
- The management of pupils' behaviour was observed at break time and when pupils were not in lessons.
- Discussions were held with pupils from the school council, members of staff, representatives of the governing body and the local authority.
- The inspector looked at a range of documents including: pupils' progress and attainment data, the results of examinations and other qualifications, the school's self-evaluation, its monitoring of the quality of teaching, safeguarding information, information about behaviour and attendance, and monitoring reports from the local authority.
- The inspector took into account the views expressed by parents interviewed by telephone. There were insufficient responses to the online questionnaire (Parent View) to provide a summary of their views.

Inspection team

Charlie Henry, Lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

Full report

In accordance with section 13 (4) of the Education Act 2005, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector is of the opinion that the school no longer requires special measures.

Information about this school

- This is a small school for pupils who have moderate learning difficulties; social, emotional and behavioural difficulties; and autistic spectrum disorders. A very small number of pupils have severe learning difficulties.
- The majority of pupils are of secondary school age, in Years 7–11. There are a small number of younger pupils; the youngest at the time of the inspection were in Year 3.
- A very high proportion of pupils are eligible for pupil premium funding. This is additional government funding for those most at risk of underachieving, including those who are known to be eligible for free school meals and those who are in the care of the local authority.
- Pupils attend the school from across the city of Nottingham. The majority of pupils are White British.
- The school is part of the Westbury Woodlands Federation. There is a single governing body for the two schools within this federation.
- Six pupils in Years 10 and 11 attend alternative providers to extend their curriculum opportunities. These providers are Notts County FC, Fuel, New College, City College and Cornerstone Angling Skills Training (CAST).

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- 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
 - use this detailed knowledge to provide enough challenge in each lesson for different pupils working at different levels of understanding or who have different skills
 - check carefully how well pupils are learning in lessons and consequently adjust their teaching if learning is not effective.
- Improve behaviour by:
 - using information about behaviour incidents to improve strategies to help pupils learn more effectively
 - working with families, the local authority and other agencies to improve attendance, especially for persistently poor attenders.
- Improve leadership and management by:
 - ensuring assessment information is accurate through rigorous checking within school and with other schools
 - using information about pupils' progress and behaviour and the quality of teaching to identify and share the most effective practices and address the less successful aspects.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils

requires improvement

- Pupils' progress over time continues to improve as a result of improvements in their behaviour and in the quality of teaching. However, the progress made in individual lessons varies too widely.
- Pupils' targets show that staff expect many more pupils to make the progress expected for their age and ability, and also an increase in those expected to exceed this level. However, this information is new and the accuracy of teachers' expectations has not yet had time to be tested. Furthermore there is insufficient external moderation of teachers' assessment of pupils' work that is the basis for this target setting.
- Pupils for whom the school makes nurturing provision because of weaknesses in communication and social skills make good progress because of the quality of their teaching and support, including through the joint work with a speech and language therapist. There are no significant differences in the progress made by groups of pupils who have different special educational needs, or between those who are the highest or lowest attainers.
- The effectiveness of additional funding received by the school for pupils in Year 7 at risk of underachievement is monitored closely. This money has been used to increase the amount of small group teaching and resources for reading and writing and has resulted in increased progress. Latest information shows that there is not a significant difference in the progress made by these pupils compared with the progress of other pupils.
- There are plans to extend the range of younger pupils' sport and physical education as a result of additional funding, including training additional staff to teach trampolining and more outdoor pursuit activities. However, there is not yet evidence to show the impact on take-up of sports activities.
- By the time they leave school most pupils achieve a qualification in English. More than two thirds gain an entry level certificate in English as well as entry level or GCSE in mathematics. However, while these qualifications are valued by the pupils some do not show that enough progress has been made since they joined the school, taking account of national expectations.
- Additional work-related qualifications and experience, including those gained through alternative provision, have enabled an increased number of pupils to achieve skills and make more informed choices as they move to the next stage in their education, employment or training. Most pupils move on successfully to further education at the age of 16.

The quality of teaching

requires improvement

- Teaching is improving and in the most effective lessons pupils learn well. However, there remains too much that is less than consistently good and consequently pupils do not make the progress they are capable of.
- There has been an increased use of information about pupils' attainments to pitch lessons at just the right level. Where this does not take place, planning is weak and some pupils are asked to do work that is too difficult or too easy; occasionally this leads to poor behaviour.
- Most lessons contain interesting activities that motivate pupils. The pupils who were interviewed

commented on how much more they enjoyed learning when they were doing practical activities.

- Teachers and teaching assistants work very effectively as a team where they know exactly what they want each pupil to learn. Occasionally staff do too much for pupils when they are capable of doing things for themselves.
- Teachers regularly check how well pupils understand the most important aspects of the lesson. Sometimes, however, the teachers do not use the pupils' responses well enough to evaluate how much they have understood. Consequently they do not adjust their teaching when necessary, for example by explaining again the key points that the pupils had not grasped.
- The teaching of reading and writing has continued to improve since the last inspection, both within classes and when pupils are given extra help away from their main lessons. Pupils use a range of suitable strategies when they try to read words that they do not recognise. They can talk about their books, explaining the stories and predicting what may come next.
- A common weakness is that teachers do not make clear to pupils how they could further improve their work. For example, they do not encourage pupils to review their own learning and behaviour targets and think harder about how they might be improved.

The behaviour and safety of pupils

requires improvement

- The behaviour of pupils requires improvement. There has been an improvement in behaviour as a result of more consistent use of the school's behaviour policy and the better match of learning targets to pupils' levels. Teachers and teaching assistants followed the agreed approaches rigorously in all of the lessons observed. There were few interruptions to learning because of poor behaviour. Where incidents did occur staff dealt with these calmly and effectively, and as far as possible gave pupils time to manage their own behaviour. There were several examples when pupils helped one another, including trying to provide support when one of their classmates was upset.
- There is much better monitoring of poor behaviour and interruptions to learning. Pupils with identified behavioural difficulties improve. The number of fixed-term exclusions has reduced and there have been no permanent exclusions in recent years. However, the full extent of improvement in behaviour is unclear since the new monitoring system is too new to show adequately the extent of these changes over time.
- Additional training about the use of effective and positive approaches to improving behaviour has been effective. Senior leaders have taken very prompt action to ensure doors cannot be locked to prevent pupils from leaving classrooms, as found at the previous inspection.
- The school's work to keep pupils safe is good. Pupils feel safe at school. They understand different forms of bullying, including racist and homophobic bullying. They said there was some bullying but it was not frequent. They know who to tell if bullying occurs or if they are upset for any other reasons, and are confident that staff would help. The school monitors the infrequent occurrence of discriminatory language. The few instances heard during the inspection were promptly tackled by staff. Pupils show respect for the well-looked-after school premises.
- Parents feel their children are safe at school and also commented that there was some bullying. They know they can contact school if they have any concerns and, like their children, are confident that effective action would be taken.

- Attendance is too low. There are examples of pupils who make substantial improvements in attendance and there has been an increase in those who have excellent attendance. However, too many pupils are persistently absent. The school effectively monitors the attendance of pupils who attend alternative provision.

The leadership and management requires improvement

- Leaders have taken quick and effective action to address the aspects of inadequate safeguarding found at the previous inspection. They have also brought about greater consistency in staff management of pupils' behaviour, improvements in teachers' planning and their expectations of what pupils can do. While there is further room for improvement to make sure the best practice always occurs, the changes so far have brought about gains in pupils' learning.
- The headteacher and executive headteacher have encouraged middle leaders to successfully develop important areas of the school's planning and monitoring. Substantial development work has taken place to improve pupils' target setting and to monitor their progress, based on national data for expected progress at different starting points. However, this information relies on teachers' assessment of pupils' levels, and this is not sufficiently checked through moderation with other schools to ensure its accuracy.
- A similar important development has brought together the different pieces of information about pupils' behaviour. This information is analysed alongside the improved information about pupils' progress to provide an understanding about the effectiveness of interventions and to identify where further support is required. Further evaluation of this information is planned to take account of information obtained from monitoring the quality of teaching.
- The curriculum is well matched the wide range of needs of the pupils. There is an appropriate emphasis on literacy and numeracy for younger pupils, and on communication skills for pupils with social difficulties or significant learning difficulties. The older pupils are prepared for their next stage of education or training with work-related opportunities, including through alternative provision, college experience and careers guidance.
- The school has targeted pupil premium funding to help improve pupils' literacy skills. This strategy has been effective and eligible pupils show accelerated gains in this very important area of learning.
- Staff training regarding child protection is routinely updated. The school works well with other services regarding safeguarding issues. Staff carry out regular visits to pupils attending alternative provision. They have a thorough approach to checking pupils' attendance when they are not studying on the school site.
- The local authority has a good understanding of the school's effectiveness and has supported the school successfully during the period when it was inadequate. It has provided advice and monitoring from a specialist adviser and has supported the link with an outstanding special school within the local authority.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - The governing body has challenged school leaders effectively to address the improvements required following the previous inspection. They visit the school to gain a first-hand understanding of its day-to-day working and how well improvements are being made.
 - Governors work across the two schools within the federation and this helps the sharing of good practice. They have supported the headteacher and executive headteacher in

improving the quality of teaching and ensure that performance management takes into account pupils' progress.

- The governors have an increased understanding of the progress that pupils are expected to make based on national data. They use this knowledge to help them understand how well different groups of pupils do and apply this to decisions about budget priorities, for example the funding from the pupil premium. Governors are aware that the improved data that is becoming available regarding pupils' progress and behaviour will allow them to monitor more effectively the school's performance.
- Statutory responsibilities are met regarding staff recruitment checks. Governors receive training concerning child protection and safeguarding, including safe recruitment.

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	432815

This inspection was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. The inspection was also deemed a section 5 inspection under the same Act.

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	48
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Sue Thornton
Headteacher	Carol Barker (Head of School) John Dyson (Executive Headteacher)
Date of previous school inspection	18 June 2013
Telephone number	0115 915 5734
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