

Whitstone Head School

Whitstone, Holsworthy, EX22 6TJ

Inspection dates 3–4 December 2014

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Good	2
	This inspection:	Inadequate	4
Leadership and management		Inadequate	4
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Requires improvement	3
Quality of teaching		Inadequate	4
Achievement of pupils		Inadequate	4

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a school that requires special measures.

- Teachers do not have an accurate picture of how well students achieve. The quality of their marking is often poor, as is their assessment of students' work.
- The Principal and other senior leaders do not know where in the school teaching is most and least effective. As a result, they are not in a position to make the necessary improvements.
- The teaching of both English and mathematics is weak and does not result in students making consistently good progress. In these subjects, students struggle to maintain their interest.
- Not all senior teachers make a strong enough contribution to improving the quality of education provided.
- Over time, some students have had poor attendance. Leaders have not improved attendance for those students.
- School leaders have not adequately analysed patterns of students' behaviour. Consequently, leaders have not developed an effective strategy to bring about improvements.
- Individual students' risk assessments do not contain enough information to enable members of staff to know how best to manage any incidents of challenging behaviour.
- The governing body is ineffective. It does not properly check how well the school is performing or sufficiently challenge or support the school's leaders.
- There is a lack of rigour in the assessment of students' social, emotional and mental health needs.

The school has the following strengths

- In a minority of subjects, such as science and humanities, students enjoy their learning and make good progress.
- Students generally conduct themselves in a sensible and responsible way in lessons and assemblies.
- Most students successfully complete courses which result in externally accredited qualifications.

Information about this inspection

- The inspector observed two assemblies and six lessons. Three of these observations were completed jointly with senior staff. During lesson observations, students' work was scrutinised.
- The inspector and the head of education completed some evaluations of students' work and looked at examples of classroom displays.
- Discussions were held with individual students, teachers, senior leaders, and the Vice Chair of Trustees.
- A range of documents was scrutinised including the school's development plans, the minutes of governors' meetings, training records, incident reports, attendance information and safeguarding policies and records.
- There were not enough responses to the online questionnaire Parent View to provide evidence of the views of parents and carers.

Inspection team

Andy Lole, Lead inspector

Additional 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.

Information about this school

- Whitstone Head School is a small residential and day special school for students with social, emotional and mental health needs. The school is run by Whitstone Head Educational Trust Limited. Currently, most students are on day placements. Four students are boarders. All students have statements of special educational needs.
- A social care inspection was carried out in April 2014. The school did not meet the national minimum standards for residential special schools.
- The school does not receive pupil premium funding, which is additional government funding for looked after children and those known to be eligible for free school meals. It does not receive additional funding for physical education and sport.
- Most students are from White British backgrounds.
- The head of education has been at the school for just over a year. The new Principal joined in September 2014.
- Two students attend Launceston College on a part-time basis.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve teaching, particularly in English and mathematics, so that all students make good progress by ensuring that:
 - teachers regularly mark work in all subjects and provide students with clear feedback about what they need to do to improve
 - teachers consistently expect students to achieve their best possible work in all subjects
 - students are effectively supported to develop their knowledge, understanding and skills in English and mathematics in a range of subjects
 - staff absences do not significantly affect the quality of teaching.
- Improve the quality of leadership and management, including governance, to ensure that:
 - accurate assessments are completed on a regular basis, including at the start of placement, to ensure that teachers can tailor the provision to meet students' individual needs
 - senior leaders regularly monitor the rates of progress and attendance of individuals and significant groups of students in order to bring about rapid improvement
 - governors have accurate information about the strengths and weaknesses of the school in order to support the school effectively and to hold leaders properly to account for its performance.
- Ensure that senior teachers take on middle management roles in order to contribute effectively to rapidly accelerating the pace of school improvement.
- Improve the attendance of those students who do not come to school regularly enough.
- Ensure that staff are in the best possible position to support students with behavioural problems by improving risk assessment procedures.

An external review of governance should be undertaken in order to assess how this aspect of leadership and management may be improved.

Inspection judgements

The leadership and management are inadequate

- Senior leaders do not monitor the progress of students or consistently and accurately assess how well each student is learning. As a result, students, and their parents and carers, do not know how well they are achieving. Senior leaders also do not know how well different groups of students are progressing. This means that they cannot compare rates of progress against other groups in the school or in other schools. The welfare of students when on local college visits is monitored well by accompanying staff.
- Senior leaders are not aware of where teaching is most and least effective in the school and where improvements need to be made. There are significant weaknesses in teaching that have not been identified or addressed by school leaders. The teaching of both English and mathematics is weak. As a result, students' progress in both these subjects is poor. A difficulty in finding suitably qualified teachers to cover the absence of key members of staff has compounded this problem.
- The assessment of, and planning for, students' social, emotional and mental health development is weak. Consequently, staff tend to react only when behaviour problems occur or when concerns are raised. Strategies to intervene pro-actively are too limited.
- Middle leadership is not effective as senior teachers have not been required to take on leadership roles to develop the quality of teaching across the whole school. Senior managers have only expected teachers to be responsible for their own teaching.
- The standard of the school's work has declined over the last few years. The new Principal has not made herself aware of the extent of the difficulties that need to be addressed. She has begun to instil a positive ethos amongst the staff by strengthening the arrangements for managing staff performance and introducing individual support sessions for staff. She has started to update some school policies so that everyone can understand them, but this is yet to have an impact on the overall quality of the provision.
- The school has provided courses which have enabled students to gain externally accredited qualifications. A wide variety of activities that students participate in helps to promote their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, and to prepare them for life in modern Britain. Activities include helping to organise events to raise funds for good causes, learning about the First World War, joining in successful social occasions and visits to local churches.
- Through the good relationships that exist between students and staff, and the supportive atmosphere, the school helps students resolve behaviour difficulties when they occur. This supports students to maintain their participation in the range of activities available to them.
- Most arrangements are in place to ensure that students are safe when they are at school. However, risk assessments are not fully fit-for-purpose. The school meets the requirements for the safe recruitment of staff.
- Guidance and advice are provided to students to support them into further education, training or employment when they leave the school.
- The school may not appoint newly qualified teachers.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - Governance is ineffective. Governors do not have an accurate understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the school, including the quality of teaching. The information they receive from senior staff about students' achievement and other key information is not detailed enough for them to know how well the school is fulfilling its responsibilities. Governors are not informed of how well staff are performing. Therefore, they are not able to ensure that there is a good match between quality of work completed and rewards offered. They neither challenge nor support school leaders sufficiently. The recent financial insecurity of the school has meant that governors have spent more time trying to increase revenue than on assuring the quality and effective management of the school.

The behaviour and safety of pupils require improvement

Behaviour

- The behaviour of students requires improvement.
- School leaders have recently begun to analyse patterns of behaviour for individuals and groups of students. This means that senior leaders are now able to identify how to improve work in this area. Such analysis has not happened in the past.

- In lessons and assemblies, students generally behave well. They respond positively to the advice and requests of staff, conforming to the good standards of behaviour expected of them. Where teaching is most ineffective, some students fail to maintain their concentration and interest.
- During break times, students make sensible choices about how to occupy themselves. These include joining in with organised activities such as playing pool or computer games or spending time alone reading.
- During lunchtimes, students and staff eat together. Students show impressive progress in their behaviour and social interactions with one another and with adults. Many demonstrate the ability to engage in polite and productive conversations, contributing to a successful social community gathering. Several students act as responsible role models by helping younger members with their table manners, offering to serve others, or tidying up at the end of the meal.
- Students said that bullying rarely occurs and that staff manage behaviour well. They think the school is a friendly place and spoke highly of their experience at school. They like the adults and recognise positive changes that have happened to them.
- There has been a reduction in the number of students excluded for a fixed term over the last year.

Safety

- The school's work to keep students safe and secure requires improvement.
- Risk assessments intended to protect staff and students from the risks posed by individual students have recently been introduced. These lack sufficient detail and fail to identify helpful strategies that staff can use to manage students' behaviour.
- Some students do not attend regularly enough. Although attempts have been made by staff to encourage these students to come to school, including driving to their homes to pick them up, this has not led to improved attendance in all cases.
- All staff have received training recently on safeguarding and three members of staff have had further training to take on overall management of this area. Concerns about the safety of students are always followed up and communicated to the appropriate people. Records are kept well. A governor trained in this area takes a keen interest and checks on the school's procedures.
- Students know how to keep themselves safe when on the internet. They report that they feel safe and well supported in school. They also know about the procedures to raise any concerns or worries that they have when they are in school.
- Systems for monitoring students on part-time college courses and ensuring they are safe are good. Adults from the school accompany students for part of each day to make sure that they are coping with what is required of them.
- Monitoring of health and safety issues have recently been improved so that senior staff and governors now share this responsibility.

The quality of teaching is inadequate

- The teaching of English is poor. The tasks set do not always motivate students. Students' work is of poor quality, mainly unmarked and often incomplete. Students are not told what they need to do to improve their work. The long-term absence of the English teacher has resulted in lessons being taught by non-specialist staff.
- In mathematics, the quality of students' work is mixed. Some teaching promotes high levels of interest and leads to good learning. However, work in students' books is often of poor quality.
- Senior leaders do not require teachers to measure students' progress systematically. As a result, assessment is carried out in different ways by different teachers. In some subjects, including English and mathematics, there is no record of assessment at all.
- Teachers rarely reinforce students' English and mathematics skills in other subjects. There is no structure for teachers to share students' individual learning objectives with each other. Therefore, teachers do not know what specific aspects to focus on when planning work to meet students' different learning needs. Displays in classrooms include lists of words which students may come across in different subjects, but there is no agreed approach of how these might be used to further students' progress in English.
- In some lessons, students enjoy learning and make good progress. During a science lesson, the teacher asked questions which resulted in a student explaining how fossils are formed. The student then engaged in an activity where his understanding of the conditions that are required to fossilise materials increased

significantly. The strong relationship between teacher and student helped the student to maintain interest in his work. Science work folders show consistently good quality work. They are marked regularly and annotated with clear advice about how to make further improvements. The learning tasks for the whole term are included, helping students understand how each lesson fits into their overall learning plan.

The achievement of pupils

is inadequate

- Current students' achievement in both English and mathematics is very poor. Students are not being sufficiently supported to produce their best possible work. In science and humanities subjects, students make better progress. Teaching in these subjects is of a higher quality, with student's showing a good level of interest and engagement in what they are learning.
- Senior leaders have failed to maintain the systems for tracking students' progress that were put in place before the last inspection. Consequently there is very little evidence of the achievement over time of different groups of students, including the most able students, or students with additional special educational needs. However, based on the students' work seen during the inspection, all groups of pupils, including those who attend Launceston College, achieve poorly. This is due to teachers not accurately identifying what students are able to achieve, and setting work that does not enable them to extend their abilities. As a result students produce work that is of a poorer quality than they could achieve.
- The school encourages students to sit externally accredited qualifications as soon as they are ready to, which results in most students achieving some qualifications. For some this includes entry level or higher level GCSEs. In 2014, all students who left the school progressed to further education or training.
- Students are entered early for GCSE examinations, where needed. The school supports students to resit GCSEs if students may subsequently gain a higher grade.

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	134062
Local authority	Cornwall
Inspection number	447976

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

Type of school	Special
School category	Non-Maintained
Age range of pupils	10–17
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	15
Appropriate authority	Trustees
Chair	Stephen Smith
Principal	Linda Moss
Date of previous school inspection	19 June 2012
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