

Watling View School

Inspection report

Unique reference number	117683
Local authority	Hertfordshire
Inspection number	379454
Inspection dates	8–9 March 2012
Lead inspector	Jeffery Plumb

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	3–19
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in the sixth form	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	90
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	17
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Bernard Bell
Headteacher	Tom Jackson-Owens
Date of previous school inspection	25 November 2008
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Introduction

Inspection team

Jeffery Plumb

Additional inspector

Ronald Elam

Additional inspector

This inspection was carried out with two days' notice. Inspectors observed nine teachers teaching eleven lessons. Four were joint observations with the headteacher. The lead inspector met formally with a number of pupils who were supported by a staff member who acted as an advocate, and spoke with many others in lessons. The arrangements for supporting pupils to get on the buses safely at the end of the school day were observed. Inspectors attended a whole school assembly, watched a lunch time school dance club and listened to pupils read. Meetings were held with two representatives of the governing body, and with school staff including support staff, teachers, middle and senior leaders. The inspectors observed the school's work and looked at a number of documents, including progress and attainment data, the school improvement plan, safeguarding policies and risk assessments, and governing body minutes. Inspectors took account of the responses to the on-line questionnaire (Parent View) in planning the inspection. They also took account of 54 inspection questionnaires returned by parents and carers as well as questionnaires completed by staff.

Information about the school

Watling View provides for pupils with severe learning difficulties and profound and multiple learning difficulties. There are four children in the Early Years Foundation stage. Almost a third of the pupils have, in addition, autistic spectrum disorder. About 20% of the pupils have multi-sensory impairment and a significant number have additional complex medical needs. All pupils have a statement of special educational needs. An above-average proportion of pupils are known to be eligible for free school meals. Most pupils are White British. There has been an increase in the proportion of those from minority ethnic backgrounds since the previous inspection, and also in the proportion who speak English as an additional language. There are a few pupils who are looked after and above 30% receive some respite care (short breaks). Year 11 students are taught together with the sixth form students. The headteacher has been in post for two years. Since the previous inspection, there has been a significant turnover of staff and a re-structuring of the senior leadership team.

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	3
Achievement of pupils	3
Quality of teaching	3
Behaviour and safety of pupils	3
Leadership and management	3

Key findings

- This is a satisfactory school. The school is not better than this because of inconsistencies in the quality of teaching, the use of assessment to set suitably challenging targets, and pupils' progress. There are pockets of good progress. Children in the Early Years Foundation Stage make rapid gains in communication. The sixth form is good. It is better than the main school because teaching is stronger and the curriculum ensures that by the time students leave the sixth form, they are well-equipped with important life skills to support their future well-being.
- Pupils' achievement is satisfactory. Pupils make satisfactory progress overall, but their rate of progress is slower in some year groups than others. This is particularly so in Key Stage 3 and Year 10.
- Teaching is satisfactory. There is some good teaching in the Early Years Foundation Stage and in the Years 11 to 14 Young Persons' Department. However, in some Key Stage 3 and Year 10 lessons pupils are not always sufficiently challenged and opportunities to develop pupils' reading, writing and mathematics skills across the range of subjects taught are occasionally missed.
- Behaviour and safety are satisfactory. Often, pupils show care and support for each other. However, while there is no bullying, there are occasional instances of challenging behaviours. Engagement with learning is inconsistent because teaching methods do not always sufficiently engage all pupils.
- In the past two years, school leaders and the governing body have improved several aspects of the school including attendance, learning in Year 11 and the leadership of teaching and management of its performance. Most teachers now match activities closely to pupils' needs, but some inconsistency remains. A system to track pupils' attainment and progress and enable more challenging targets to be set has just been introduced, but this is not fully embedded.

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Schools whose overall effectiveness is judged satisfactory may receive a monitoring visit by an Ofsted inspector before their next section 5 inspection.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve pupils' progress by ensuring that:
 - accurate assessments are used consistently to set challenging targets
 - teachers consistently use these targets lesson-by-lesson to plan specific learning outcomes for pupils
 - senior leaders rigorously and regularly monitor pupils' progress to trigger interventions if they are required.

- Improve teaching, particularly at Key Stage 3 and in Year 10, by making sure that:
 - planned activities are challenging and well-matched to pupils' most important learning and development needs
 - pupils are engaged with learning at all times
 - every opportunity is taken to develop pupils' literacy and mathematical skills across all subjects.

Main report

Achievement of pupils

Pupils' progress is satisfactory relative to their well-below-average starting points. Progress is satisfactory in English, mathematics and information and communication technology throughout the school but varies too much in different age groups. This is less positive than the view of most parents and carers who believe that their children achieve well. In the Early Years Foundation Stage, children make rapid gains and this is sustained for most of them until the end of Key Stage 2. Progress slows in Key Stage 3 and Year 10 but improves in Year 11 and at post-16. By the time students leave the sixth form, they have the communication and life skills required to be as successful as possible in the adult world, taking their individual capabilities into account. All Year 14 students who left last year successfully secured a college place.

A similar picture is seen in the progress pupils make during lessons. The use of assessment to plan activities to meet individuals' needs in Key Stage 3 and Year 10 lessons is not as strong or consistent as it is throughout the rest of the school. Consequently, targets are not always set at a high enough level of challenge and this limits pupils' progress. Occasionally, these pupils are all asked to complete the same work which does not meet their individual needs or challenge them to achieve sufficiently well. For example, in one lesson all pupils had the same literacy target which was too easy for some and too difficult for others.

There is no significant difference in the progress made by pupils with different needs. Equality of opportunity for all groups and individuals to access learning, however

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complex their needs, is a core value of the school. For example, students in wheelchairs and those using walking frames were supported to dance as enthusiastically as their peers who walk unaided. All forms of communication are equally well regarded and strongly encouraged. Most pupils make good progress in developing communication skills, including eye pointing, speaking and the use of signs, symbols and switches.

Quality of teaching

Promoting dignity and demonstrating a commitment to equality of opportunity for learning are strengths of teaching. Teachers generally position pupils skilfully to help maximise their learning. For example, those with autistic spectrum disorder are moved away from known distractions, such as doors, to help them concentrate effectively on their work. Students with profound and multiple learning difficulties are usually comfortably positioned and supported to communicate independent choices. In one such lesson, pupils' hands were massaged before they were challenged to operate a switch to indicate their choice. A few stretched to their maximum capability, operated the switch, lifted their heads and smiled as the music they chose started to play. The high expectations for them were met, and the pupils were delighted with their own success. Such activities promote pupils' spiritual and personal development effectively.

Most parents and carers believe that their child is well taught. While this is the case in some lessons, it is not consistently so in all lessons. Teaching is seldom better than satisfactory in Key Stage 3 and Year 10. Some lessons are too adult-led and lack sufficient challenge. In such lessons, particularly where teachers work one-to-one with an individual and leave the others waiting passively for their turn, the pace of learning drops. In a few lessons for pupils with severe learning difficulties opportunities to extend their reading, writing and mathematical skills are sometimes missed. Teaching in the Early Years Foundation Stage and in the Young Persons' Department is strong. Because of this, children in the Early Years Foundation Stage quickly learn to communicate independent choices by eye pointing, signing and vocalising, and their independence increases speedily. Year 11 and sixth form students develop important life skills such as personal hygiene and shopping to as independent a level as possible within their capabilities.

Observations show that pupils mostly enjoy their lessons, and this was confirmed by pupils of wide-ranging needs through speaking, the use of symbols and facial expression. The curriculum provides a good basis for interesting and relevant teaching and for promoting pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Good examples include the teaching of work-related skills in Years 10 to 14 and supporting pupils' wonder and amazement as they track glowing objects and participate in activities to help them experience faiths other than Christianity.

Behaviour and safety of pupils

Pupils' attitudes to learning are satisfactory, but some inconsistencies remain. The

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most positive behaviour for learning occurs where activities are well matched to pupils' needs. For example, some sixth form students work very hard and successfully to develop the skills required to travel independently. However, on a few occasions, pupils are not sufficiently stimulated which results in less positive attitudes. For example, while some pupils read words confidently, their understanding of what they have read is not supported, and so their interest wanes.

Pupils are usually polite and courteous and enjoy the many opportunities provided for them to work together. Within their capabilities pupils usually care for each other well. Higher-attaining sixth-form students support those with more complex needs by helping them plan what they need to buy to prepare a meal. No incidents of racist or prejudiced-based bullying have been recorded over several years. Nevertheless, the school ensures that it includes work on appropriate behaviour in its regular teaching so that pupils understand that what they think might be 'fun', such as tickling, could actually be bullying or harassment.

Overall, teachers manage challenging behaviour well. Occasionally, fights break out between pupils with severe learning difficulties at break-time. These are swiftly stopped by staff and those involved are counselled, apologise to each other and shake hands. Often, as pupils' communication skills improve, their frustration dissipates and their behaviour becomes much better. Most parents and carers believe that behaviour is good and feel confident that their child is safe. Pupils who speak using words demonstrate that they know how to keep themselves safe. They understand the importance of, as they say, 'Belting up when we get on the bus to go swimming and when we are at the pool...no running, no jumping ... no speaking to strangers'. A few students with profound and multiple learning difficulties, through gesture and facial expressions, state a preference for which adults they want to support them with their intimate care needs. All are encouraged to do so.

Leadership and management

The headteacher and governing body have successfully managed the turnover of a significant number of teachers over the past two years. Throughout this time attendance has improved, the curriculum provision for Year 11 pupils has got better and subject leaders have become clearer about their role in improving achievement. Management systems ensure pupils are safe and secure. Safeguarding procedures meet requirements and risk assessments are thorough and detailed. Year 14 students continue to leave the school well-equipped with communication and life skills to support them in adulthood. The evaluation of what is required to improve the school further is robust. For example, although monitoring and targeted professional development have already improved teaching; the leadership team has identified what more is required to improve its quality and consistency. A new whole-school system has recently been implemented to improve the accuracy of assessment from which more challenging targets can be set. Given these improvements and the clarity with which further improvements have been identified, the school has satisfactory capacity for further sustained improvement.

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The curriculum is broad, balanced and meets most pupils' needs effectively. There are curriculum strengths, particularly in the Early Years Foundation Stage and the vocational pathway for Year 11 and post-16 students, whose work-experience opportunities are good. However, planning for supporting literacy and numeracy through all of the subjects taught at Key Stage 3 and in Year 10 is not sufficiently good. Communication and support for parents and carers are good and include workshops on how to help their children learn. Residential visits make a valuable contribution to pupils' social development. Assemblies and the sensory garden are used effectively to raise pupils' spiritual awareness and understanding of a range of different cultures. Disability equality and tackling discrimination lie at the heart of this school. Every effort is taken to remove obstacles so that pupils are included as equals in the local community. For example, pupils sing together with mainstream peers at public events, and students from local secondary mainstream schools work with pupils from Watling View on a regular basis.

Glossary

What inspection judgements mean

Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	These features are highly effective. An outstanding school provides exceptionally well for all 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

Type of school	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Nursery schools	46	46	8	0
Primary schools	8	47	40	5
Secondary schools	14	38	40	8
Special schools	28	48	20	4
Pupil referral units	15	50	29	5
All schools	11	46	38	6

New school inspection arrangements have been introduced from 1 January 2012. This means that inspectors make judgements that were not made previously.

The data in the table above are for the period 1 September 2010 to 31 August 2011 and represent judgements that were made under the school inspection arrangements that were introduced on 1 September 2009. These data are consistent with the latest published official statistics about maintained school inspection outcomes (see www.ofsted.gov.uk).

The sample of schools inspected during 2010/11 was not representative of all schools nationally, as weaker schools are inspected more frequently than good or outstanding schools.

Primary schools include primary academy converters. Secondary schools include secondary academy converters, sponsor-led academies and city technology colleges. Special schools include special academy converters and non-maintained special schools.

Percentages are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100.

Common terminology used by inspectors

Achievement:	the progress and success of a pupil in their learning and development taking account of their attainment.
Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
Attendance	the regular attendance of pupils at school and in lessons, taking into account the school's efforts to encourage good attendance.
Behaviour	how well pupils behave in lessons, with emphasis on their attitude to learning. Pupils' punctuality to lessons and their conduct around the school.
Capacity to improve:	the proven ability of the school to continue improving based on its self-evaluation and 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 governors and 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:	inspectors form a judgement on a school's overall effectiveness based on the findings from their inspection of the school.
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.
Safety	how safe pupils are in school, including in lessons; and their understanding of risks. Pupils' freedom from bullying and harassment. How well the school promotes safety, for example e-learning.

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.



12 March 2012

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Watling View School, St Albans, AL1 2NU

Thank you for welcoming me and my colleague to your school. Watling View is a satisfactory school and this means that another inspector may visit to see how well it is improving.

- By Year 13 you are equipped with important life skills and are ready to go to college. You are confident and some of you can travel safely by yourselves. It is good to see that with help, many of you are able to go shopping and plan and cook a meal.
- You like school, your attendance is good and you mostly enjoy your lessons. Occasionally, your teachers do not involve you in learning quickly enough. Most of you understand how to keep yourselves safe and told us that you understand why you must put a belt on when you get on the bus to go swimming, and that you must not run on the side of the swimming pool.
- Teaching is usually satisfactory and sometimes good. It is best in the Early Years Foundation Stage and on the Young Persons' Programme. We have asked your teachers to help you more with your reading, writing, counting, weighing and measuring in all of your subjects. We have asked them always to plan interesting activities to help you become more independent and make choices for yourselves. We have also asked them to challenge you to communicate your needs confidently in whatever way you choose.
- Your headteacher and governors work hard and successfully to make improvements at your school. They make sure you are cared for well. We have asked them to speed up actions to improve teaching so that you are always challenged to do your very best. We have also asked them to speed up the progress you make, particularly at Key Stage 3 and in Year 10.

Please help your school to improve by always behaving well and trying your best.

Yours sincerely

Jeffery Plumb
Lead inspector

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