

John Grant School, Caister-on-Sea

St George's Drive, Caister-on-Sea, Great Yarmouth, Norfolk NR30 5QW

Inspection dates 2–3 October 2012

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Good	2
	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

- There has been a period of instability since the previous inspection. Temporary leadership arrangements have successfully brought the school to a position where the new leadership team can take the school forward with confidence but, in the intervening period, pupils' achievements and the quality of teaching have declined from the good outcomes identified previously.
- Over the past two years, pupils' progress is broadly as expected for their ability.
- There is insufficient teaching that is good or better. Pupils are not actively enough engaged in learning.
- Teaching does not make best use of lesson time and is not planned in enough detail for pupils to make good progress.
- There is not enough use of signing by adults or enough attention to helping pupils use their preferred style of communication to full effect.
- Although pupils' social behaviour is good and this ensures a safe environment, they have too few opportunities to communicate what they have learnt and understood, and few opportunities to work collaboratively.
- There is no systematic approach for teaching pupils to read and spell.
- The sixth form requires improvement to embed recent developments to the curriculum and assessing students' progress.
- The senior leadership team and governing body have not checked the school's work thoroughly enough or used what they know sufficiently to maintain good teaching and learning.

The school has the following strengths

- The new headteacher and new acting deputy headteacher have a good understanding of what needs to be done and how to do it.
- Staff manage pupils' behaviour well.
- Relationships between staff and pupils are good.
- There is some good teaching, notably for pupils with profound and multiple difficulties and older students.
- There have been some good improvements to the curriculum, particularly for pupils with the most complex needs and to provide accreditation for older students.

Information about this inspection

- The school was informed of this inspection on the day before the inspection commenced.
- Thirteen lessons were observed and pupils' learning was also evaluated through looking at their work and through case studies.
- Meetings were held with the headteacher, acting deputy headteacher, the two assistant headteachers, four members of the governing body, teachers, co-educators and a local authority adviser. The views of staff were also gained through a questionnaire completed by 26 staff.
- The views of pupils were gained through a meeting with the school council and informal conversations with others throughout the inspection.
- The views of parents and carers were gained from seven responses to the Parent View survey.
- Documents scrutinised included the school's data on pupils' progress, the school action plan, information about safeguarding pupils, the school's monitoring of teaching, and attendance data.

Inspection team

Heather Yaxley, Lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

Kathleen Yates

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- John Grant School caters for pupils with statements of special educational needs relating predominantly to severe learning difficulties, profound and multiple learning difficulties and autism.
- The further education unit (sixth form) is for students in Years 12, 13 and 14.
- The proportion of pupils eligible for the pupil premium funding is over twice the national average.
- The current headteacher and acting deputy headteacher started at the school three weeks ago. Temporary leadership arrangements have been in place for most of the time since the previous inspection.
- The governing body is currently led by the Vice-Chair and a new Chair of the Governing Body is due to be appointed at the next meeting.
- The school is a Specialist Sports College and has the Investors in People award (bronze).

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve teaching so that pupils' achievements are at least good by:
 - having a clear and shared understanding of what good teaching looks like
 - modelling good teaching and sharing good practice from within and outside the school
 - maximising pupils' communication
 - maximising learning time
 - planning lessons with enough detail to personalise activities for each pupil
 - implementing a systematic, suitable approach for teaching reading and spelling
 - improving the learning environment, particularly in the Early Years Foundation Stage class.
- Ensure that the monitoring by leaders, managers and the governing body leads to a robust evaluation of the school's strengths and weaknesses, and is used to inform suitable action plans.
- Undertake a comprehensive, external audit of the work of the governing body and implement a suitable plan to ensure good governance.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils requires improvement

- The school's information on pupils' progress has improved recently and shows that most pupils made the progress expected of them over the past academic year. Scrutiny of pupils' work confirms this. Pupils' progress over the past academic year is stronger than in the previous year. This is the case for pupils in all key stages, for students in the further education unit and for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage.
- Achievement in Key Stages 3, 4 and in the further education unit is better than in Key Stages 1 and 2. Those pupils who have had the most stability in teaching achieve better than others.
- Pupils' achievement in reading is better than writing. Although still lagging behind that of reading, writing and mathematics, achievement in science has improved.
- The school has identified no differences currently in the achievements of pupils with different abilities and pupils eligible for the pupil premium funding achieve as well as others.
- Pupils with the most complex needs respond well to a highly-structured, yet not overly-controlled, learning environment. This has helped to reverse the past underachievement of a small group of pupils with autism. They now make progress in line with other groups.

Pupils respond well when teaching prepares them specifically for the task in hand and then gives them ample opportunity to practise the skills independently. An example is when Key Stage 4 students prepared spicy pizzas and banana buns with confidence and competence. This was because they were well prepared before going into the cookery room, and had instructions that they could understand and follow independently when they were there.

The quality of teaching requires improvement

- Differences in the quality of teaching hinge on the level of challenge to individual pupils, and the opportunities available to communicate their needs and accomplishments independently and spontaneously.
- Pupils do not make good progress when learning is too adult-led and when pupils need too much adult support to complete the work. This leads to some passivity from pupils.
- Teaching that has a good balance between teacher-talk and teachers' questioning leads to good progress. For example, when the adults provided students in a further education class with questions that challenged their knowledge and understanding, they made good progress in their awareness of how to stay safe in school.
- When lessons are planned with clear aims for individual pupils, progress accelerates. For example, a group of pupils with profound and multiple learning difficulties engaged with the adults at an outstanding level when recognising photographs and when having a snack. Their attention and willingness to participate was sustained for an extended period of time. This was because the adults were very clear about when to intervene, when to wait and how to make the most of pupils' spontaneous attempts to communicate their understanding and preferences.
- Communication that comes from adults to pupils is usually supported appropriately through

symbols or other points of reference. There is some signing by adults but not enough to ensure that pupils understand fully or that they experience a consistent approach. Communication that comes from pupils to adults or between pupils is not structured or encourage sufficiently for pupils to participate fully in learning.

- Activities that require pupils to read and spell are not completed to a good standard or sufficiently independently. This is because there is no systematic approach to teaching reading and spelling.
- Much time and attention is given to pupils' personal care and getting ready for lessons to start, but this, together with extended periods for lunch and snacks, can reduce time for teaching and a lack of urgency for the task in hand.
- Some classrooms are suitably set up to encourage pupils' curiosity and to encourage responsibility in getting what they need to get started at a task. In a Key Stage 2 class, this helped pupils to be very independent and cooperative in getting out the resources needed to make a prompt start and to file their work away at the end of the lesson.
- Not all classrooms present an appropriately lively or interactive environment, or provide sensory experiences that are integral to pupils' learning. One example is the Early Years Foundation Stage classroom, where the outside and inside areas are not used to full effect.

The behaviour and safety of pupils requires improvement

- This aspect of the school's work requires improvement rather than being good because pupils' skills in communication and their active involvement in learning are not strong features of their personal development. Other aspects of their personal development are strong, particularly their social behaviour.
 - Pupils' confidence and sense of responsibility around the school are very evident. They particularly enjoy the company of adults, enjoy being eco-warriors and, wherever possible, can be trusted to conduct themselves around the school without too much adult support. They understand how to be safe around school.
 - Lunchtimes are relaxed, social occasions where pupils look after themselves as much as they can. This starts with getting the lunch of their choice from the hatch to the table, and ends with clearing it all away without fuss or calamity.
 - The way that different groups of pupils conduct themselves around school indicates that they feel safe around one another and that they trust adults. The absence of anxiety-driven behaviours by autistic pupils indicates that they are settled in their environment and feel secure within it. It is particularly notable that pupils with autism manage their behaviour well with other pupils in class and on the playground.
 - Students in the further education unit demonstrate increasing levels of independence and reliability, supported by high expectations from staff and a revised curriculum to prepare them for life after school.
 - Behaviour management is a strong feature of teaching and allows learning to proceed uninterrupted and in a relaxed atmosphere. Over the past two years, training for staff has led to
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pupils' improved behaviour. The incidence of restraint, linked to a few pupils with particularly complex needs, has reduced as a result of changes to their curriculum and teaching.

- There are a few opportunities for pupils to socialise and learn with pupils in other schools. The potential for this to enhance pupils' academic and personal achievements has not been thoroughly explored, particularly for students in Key Stages 3 and 4 and in the further education unit.

The leadership and management requires improvement

- A long period of temporary leadership has led to some instability and frustration for staff, as well as a lack of attention to detail when planning school improvement. The local authority and governing body successfully ensured the day-to-day management of the school.
- During this period, day-to-day management has overshadowed strategic development. Actions to improve pupils' achievement and the quality of teaching have not been planned or evaluated carefully enough. A lack of rigorous evaluation has led to an over-inflated picture of how well the school is performing.
- Recognition of the decline in pupils' achievements and in the quality of teaching led to concerted and effective support from the local authority and temporary leaders. The decline was halted and the new headteacher has inherited a staff team that has the skills and ambition to make further improvements. There is a real sense of anticipation and willingness among staff, senior leaders and the governing body to get on with the job of providing greater rigour to their work.
- A system for monitoring staff performance is in place but it is not linked clearly enough to pupils' achievements and improving teaching. Staff feel that their training needs are identified but are not always followed up.
- The pupil premium funding has been used to supplement activities linked to the school's specialist status for sports. It has not been used specifically for the pupils that it is intended for and no evaluation has taken place to see if the funding has made a difference to pupils' achievements.
- The curriculum has improved since the previous inspection. Teachers in the further education unit have done a good job in extending opportunities for accrediting students' skills and checking on how much progress each student makes. They are very reflective in their approach to improving this provision. Activities linked to the school's specialism have increased the sporting opportunities for pupils here and from other schools.
- The few parents and carers who responded to the Parent View survey would recommend this school to others and none had concerns relating to pupils' care, safety or behaviour.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - has ensured that statutory responsibilities are met, including those for safeguarding children
 - does not feel that it has had sufficient information about the quality of the school's work to provide a constantly high professional challenge
 - has not been rigorous enough over the past few years in playing a full part in school improvement
 - is committed to moving the school forward.

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	121265
Local authority	Norfolk
Inspection number	402014

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	126
Of which, number on roll in sixth form	21
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Jack Jones (acting)
Headteacher	Pam Ashworth
Date of previous school inspection	25-26 February 2010
Telephone number	01493 720158
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