

# St John's Wood Community School

Longridge, Knutsford, Cheshire WA16 8PA

**Inspection dates** 12–13 September 2012

|                                |                      |                   |          |
|--------------------------------|----------------------|-------------------|----------|
| <b>Overall effectiveness</b>   | Previous inspection: | Good              | 2        |
|                                | This inspection:     | <b>Inadequate</b> | <b>4</b> |
| Achievement of pupils          |                      | Inadequate        | 4        |
| Quality of teaching            |                      | Inadequate        | 4        |
| 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.

- Students' achievement is inadequate. Too many students fail to make the expected levels of progress, especially in English, mathematics and science, from their average starting points. By the end of Key Stage 4 students do not do as well as they should.
- Teaching is inadequate. Too many staff have low expectations of what students can achieve, resulting in insufficient challenge and a slow pace in many lessons. The curriculum is not meeting the needs of many students. Consequently, students are not always motivated or interested in their learning.
- Behaviour and safety are inadequate. Poor behaviour frequently disrupts learning, particularly where the work is not well-matched to the needs of individual students. Exclusion rates are too high.
- Leadership and management are inadequate. Senior leaders, including members of the governing body, have failed to check on students' progress and monitor teaching effectively. As a result, they have not identified and tackled the weaknesses in the quality of teaching and the impact this has had on students' achievements.

### The school has the following strengths

- The positive relationships staff have with students ensures that students feel a sense of security when they are in school
- Provision of sporting and leisure opportunities within the physical education curriculum are enriching students' self-esteem and confidence.

## Information about this inspection

- The inspector observed nine lessons taught by seven teachers. In addition, the inspector made a number of other short visits to lessons.
- Meetings were held with a group of students, the acting chair of the governing body, teaching staff and senior leaders. In addition, several discussions were held with a representative of the local authority and with the executive headteacher-designate.
- The inspector looked at a range of documents including: students' progress data; results of GCSE examinations; safeguarding information; minutes of governing body meetings; reports from external advisers; and the school's self-evaluation.
- The inspector took into account the views expressed in staff questionnaires. There were no responses to the online questionnaire (Parent View).

## Inspection team

Hilary Ward, 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

- St John's is a small special school for students who have behavioural, social and emotional difficulties and/or specific and moderate learning difficulties. All students have a statement of special educational needs.
- The proportion of students known to be eligible for the Pupil Premium is well above the national average. There are many more boys than girls on roll. All students are of White British heritage. Three of the students are in the care of the local authority.
- The school is led and managed by an acting headteacher and an acting deputy headteacher. The acting headteacher took up post following the unexpected departure of the previous headteacher in April 2012. Since September 2012, the governing body has also had an acting chair. The local authority has taken steps to strengthen leadership by linking St John's Wood School in a federation with Adelaide School. They have appointed the partner school's headteacher as executive headteacher of the federation. Arrangements for the day-to-day management are still to be finalised. The school uses Trade Skills placements for a small number of students and has very recently begun courses with Mid Cheshire College

### What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Eradicate inadequate teaching and improve the achievement of all students, particularly in mathematics and science, at both key stages by:
  - undertaking clear baseline assessments and identifying ambitious targets for individuals which are monitored on a regular basis
  - more rigorously assessing students' progress and analysing data so that any necessary interventions can be put in place at an early stage
  - improving the curriculum to broaden access to a range of curriculum pathways and increased opportunities to achieve awards
  - raising staff's expectations of the standard and amount of work individual students should produce
  - ensuring lessons are planned to take account of the different abilities and incorporate teaching strategies that make learning more lively and engaging for students
  - involving students more in understanding what they need to do to improve their work.
- Improve the school's leadership and management and hence its capacity to sustain improvement by:
  - finalising and fully implementing the local authority's plans to strengthen school leadership, by the end of October 2012
  - acting on the improvements identified in the school's recent more robust self-evaluation by drawing up an action plan which sets clear measurable targets
  - rigorously monitoring teaching and setting performance management targets which are linked to improved outcomes for students
  - sharing best practice in assessment through moderation with other providers.

- Improve governance by:
  - raising the awareness of members of the governing body of the importance of their role in holding the school's leaders to account
  - increasing governors' knowledge and understanding of their roles so that they can carry them out effectively.
- Secure improvements in behaviour and reduce the number of exclusions both from school and lessons by:
  - implementing a whole-school approach to the management of behaviour which is consistently applied
  - developing a more individualised approach to planning for the management of behaviour which improves students' capacity to manage their own behaviour and successfully promotes their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development
  - improving the curriculum to better meet students' interests so that they are motivated to participate in lessons and to attend school, particularly in Year 11.

## Inspection judgements

### The achievement of pupils

### is inadequate

- Students are admitted to the school with attainment that is broadly in line with that seen in most schools. Results in GCSE examinations over the last three years have been generally low, particularly in the core subjects. Attainment is most notably poor in mathematics and science. Raising attainment in mathematics was an area for improvement highlighted at the previous inspection but this has not been accomplished. Attainment in science has deteriorated over the last few years.
- There is an expectation amongst staff that students' attendance will fall in Year 11, so students are encouraged to take GCSEs at the end of Year 10, with resulting poor grades. While those students who wish to do so are able to re-sit GCSEs there is little to motivate other Year 11 students to attend school.
- The school's own assessment data and a scrutiny of students' work shows that too few make expected or better progress across both key stages given their starting points and abilities. Data have been collected but not analysed effectively enough over the last few years to indicate what actions need to be taken to raise attainment.
- Very few students know what they need to do to improve their work or the targets they are aiming for.
- There are few interventions in place for those students who need support to develop their basic literacy and numeracy skills. A programme for those with specific reading and writing difficulties has recently been introduced and is beginning to show some benefit. Many students enter the school with broadly average literacy and numeracy skills but do not improve sufficiently to achieve awards which match their ability.
- Some alternative courses have been introduced very recently in some of the more practical subjects. These have motivated and engaged students. In physical education, for example, students have enjoyed good and outstanding success in a BTEC award.
- Students' personal and social development is supported by mainly good relationships between students and staff and enhanced by the very recent introduction of the Duke of Edinburgh award for students in Years 10 and 11. However, there is little in the curriculum which promotes students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.
- Overall, there is no significant difference in rates of progress of differing groups of students, including the small number of girls and those with specific or moderate learning difficulties. The school has not implemented a plan of action for using the Pupil Premium funding to support the learning and achievement of students for whom it is intended. A few students attend work and training with off-site providers but these do not lead to any accreditation and no monitoring reports have gone to the governing body.

**The quality of teaching is inadequate**

- Over time, teachers' expectations have been too low. Learning has been restricted by a lack of pace and challenge, resulting in poor rates of progress.
- Despite the small numbers of students in classes, lessons are often planned for the whole group without taking individual students' needs into account. This often results in work which is too easy for some or too difficult for others.
- Teachers do not assess students' learning often enough to ensure they have an accurate picture of the stage students have reached.
- Lessons do not build securely on the skills students have already mastered and do not take enough account of how well they are learning in the lesson. Too often students spend time on work they can already do well. For example, a scrutiny of mathematics work books indicated that all year groups are currently covering the same topic. This can result in students arriving in lessons unmotivated and unwilling to work. Incidents of unacceptable behaviour then occur which disrupts learning.
- In the better lessons, tasks and activities are closely matched to the needs and interests of students. For instance, in a geography lesson with a Year 7 group, the teacher skilfully adapted her planning when it became apparent that students were very knowledgeable about and interested in the topic of continents. As a result, students shared their knowledge eagerly and were keen to move on and learn more.
- Teaching assistants provide good personal support and there are productive relationships which support learning. Too often teaching assistants are used to manage unacceptable behaviour and this distracts from their contribution to students' learning and progress.

**The behaviour and safety of pupils are inadequate**

- There is a very high number of incidents of poor behaviour. Inappropriate actions such as diving under desks, running around the classroom or loud verbal comments disrupt the learning in lessons.
- Over the last few years, rates of fixed-term exclusions have been very high. The school was successful in bringing exclusions down last year but during the summer term numbers of exclusions rose significantly.
- A new behaviour policy was introduced last year but staff are not confident in applying it and students take advantage of the resulting lack of consistency.
- Incidents of poor behaviour occur in lessons more frequently where students voice the opinion: 'I'm bored' or 'We've done this before.'
- There is no lack of commitment to caring for and supporting students. Staff manage behaviour safely, but this is often done by removing students from the classroom for periods of time. Staff work hard to reintegrate students into the classroom following cooling-off periods but fractured experiences have an adverse impact on the learning and progress of these students. Strategies for managing behaviour focus more on reacting to and defusing poor behaviour rather than in preventing it from occurring.
- Poor behaviour increases as students get older. Even taking into account the nature of the students' special educational needs, this indicates that the school is failing to help students develop the moral and social codes and the strategies they will need to manage their own behaviour in their future lives.
- The school does not currently record incidents of bullying separately, although there is a separate log for racist bullying. Such incidents are infrequent. In a meeting the inspector had with a representative group of students, they did not express particular concerns about bullying and students were seen to be supportive of each other and to have many good relationships with one another.
- A few students attend off-site placements which are monitored satisfactorily to ensure students' safety and attendance. Off-site provision has been extended, from this term, with Year 10 students attending courses at Mid Cheshire College one afternoon a week. There are too few other opportunities for students to prepare for transition into the world of work or continuing education.

- Attendance is below the national average for secondary schools but has improved over the last few years. The appointment of a learning mentor who monitors absences has had some positive results. Absence is highest in Year 11, which suggests students are not engaged in the curriculum and miss preparation for their future lives.

### **The leadership and management are inadequate**

- The leadership and management arrangements are too fragile to secure improvement. The local authority has, therefore, intervened to create a federation with another special school to address the school's inherent weaknesses.
- The quality of teaching has not been monitored rigorously to help teachers improve their practice and thereby secure improvements in learning. Observations of teaching and learning have been carried out routinely but judgements have been over-generous. Teachers' performance management has not been effective enough in ensuring the quality of their teaching is good enough and securely linked to raising students' achievements.
- Over the last few years, the school's leaders have not ensured that high expectations for students' personal and academic progress have been communicated and shared with staff. As a result, students' achievement is inadequate.
- The curriculum is too narrow to meet students' interests and abilities. There are too few opportunities for them to gain awards other than GCSEs; as a result students often lack motivation.
- The temporary leaders have undertaken a recent self-evaluation which has been more robust and honest in identifying weaknesses, but actions to address these weaknesses have yet to be implemented.
- Safeguarding arrangements meet statutory requirements. Appropriate policies and procedures are in place in relation to health, safety and the promotion of equality.

### **■ The governance of the school: is inadequate**

- Members of the governing body have been too accepting of the school's over-generous evaluation of its work over the years. They have been surprised by the information that students' achievements and the quality of teaching are inadequate, because they do not have the knowledge to hold the school to account effectively.
- Governors have insufficient understanding of their role in implementing and monitoring actions for improvement, including monitoring and evaluating the impact of the use of Pupil Premium.

## 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

|                                |               |
|--------------------------------|---------------|
| <b>Unique reference number</b> | 131733        |
| <b>Local authority</b>         | Cheshire East |
| <b>Inspection number</b>       | 402504        |

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

|  |                                  |
|--|----------------------------------|
| <b>Type of school</b>                      | Special                          |
| <b>School category</b>                     | Community special                |
| <b>Age range of pupils</b>                 | 11-16                            |
| <b>Gender of pupils</b>                    | Mixed                            |
| <b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b> | 37                               |
| <b>Appropriate authority</b>               | The governing body               |
| <b>Acting Chair</b>                        | Mr S Vaja                        |
| <b>Acting Headteacher</b>                  | Mrs S Clayton                    |
| <b>Date of previous school inspection</b>  | 28-29 April 2010                 |
| <b>Telephone number</b>                    | 01625 383045                     |
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