

Notton House School

28 Notton, Lacock, Wiltshire, SN15 2NF

Inspection dates 21–22 November 2012

| 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

- Although progress has accelerated since the last full inspection, students' achievement is not good enough because the range of subjects offered in the past has been too narrow. New examination courses introduced recently have not had time to improve students' achievement.
- There is not enough teaching that is good or better and the best features of teaching are not shared effectively across the school.
- Although senior leaders have improved many areas of the school's work, their checking of teaching does not result in teachers being given sufficient help on how to improve quickly.
- Students receive too much adult help in some lessons which limits opportunities for them to learn how to work on their own.
- Students' reading and writing skills are not taught enough in all subjects.
- Teachers' planning varies too much and in some lessons there is insufficient focus on what students are expected to learn from the activities provided.
- The governing body receives detailed information on students' progress, but does not provide enough challenge to the headteacher and senior leaders to check the quality of teaching and to know how well resources are used to improve learning.

The school has the following strengths

- The drive of the headteacher and new senior leadership team has raised expectations across the school since the last full inspection. This has had a marked impact on improving the quality of teaching and raising students' achievement.
- Students enjoy learning because lessons contain practical activities.
- A committed staff team has a good understanding of students' emotional and social needs.
- Staff form good relationships with students and are successful in helping them to think about, and improve, their behaviour.
- Extra help given to students who struggle with their reading and writing helps them to catch up quickly.

Information about this inspection

- The inspector observed eight lessons, one of which one was a joint observation with the deputy headteacher, and a school assembly.
- Meetings and discussions were held with the headteacher, staff, a representative of the local authority and members of the governing body.
- The views of students were gained through informal conversations, a meeting with the school council and by taking account of the findings of an independent survey of students' views organised by the school.
- The views of parents and carers were gained through meetings with a parent and a parent of a former student, and scrutiny of the school's own parental questionnaires.
- Documents scrutinised included the school's plans for improvement, data on students' progress, lesson plans, work in students' books and records relating to behaviour, attendance and safeguarding.
- The residential provision did not form part of this inspection.

Inspection team

Andrew Redpath, 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

- In January 2011 the school was judged to require special measures because it was failing to give its students an acceptable standard of education and the persons responsible for leading or governing the school were not demonstrating the capacity to secure the necessary improvement. Since that time, the school has received four monitoring inspections by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors.
- Notton House School is a residential special school for students who have a statement of special educational needs relating to behaviour, emotional and social difficulties. Many students have additional learning difficulties linked with low levels of literacy and numeracy.
- Most students reside at the school during the week and return home at the weekend. A small number in Years 10 and 11 attend as day students.
- Almost all students come from the City of Bristol, although a small number attend from neighbouring local authorities.
- Just over half of the pupils are eligible for the pupil premium funding, which provides additional funding for students known to be eligible for free school meals or in the care of the local authority and those with a parent or carer serving in the armed forces. This is a much higher proportion than that found in schools nationally.
- Some older students receive part of their education at an off-site tutorial base or at work-related learning centres located in Bristol approximately 30 miles away.
- Since the last inspection the leadership team and governing body have been reorganised.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Help students to learn how to work on their own by:
 - reviewing how adults work in lessons so students only receive support when it is needed
 - increasing opportunities for students to take responsibility around the school.
- Improve teaching and learning by:
 - providing more detailed information to teachers on how they can improve their teaching with clear timescales for action
 - giving opportunities for students to practise their reading and writing skills in all subjects
 - planning lessons which build on what students already know and focus clearly on what students are expected to learn.
- Strengthen leadership and management by:
 - sharing the best features of teaching with staff across the school to ensure more teaching is good or outstanding
 - increasing the ability of the governing body to understand and challenge the school's performance
 - undertaking an external review of the governing body to identify what further support and training governors need.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils

requires improvement

- Students enter the school with lower than expected levels of reading, writing and numeracy due to their learning difficulties or to previous interruptions in their education.
- More interesting and practical lessons, combined with extra individual help for those who struggle with reading and writing, have helped to quicken students' progress and many are closing the gap with their peers.
- The school's data show that almost all groups are making better progress, including those who are eligible for free school meals. Students who are resident at the school perform better than those who attend as day students. The school does not target the funding it receives through the pupil premium but has plans to do so.
- Achievement in Years 6 to 9 is better than for older students.
- In Years 10 and 11, several students gain GCSE or equivalent passes in mathematics, English and science subjects each year. Until recently, students have not been offered challenging courses in other subjects and this has resulted in low achievement overall.
- Students are now making better progress because they are studying a suitable number of GCSE courses. Some attend off-site centres where they take vocational courses in construction, land-based studies or motor vehicle maintenance. They enjoy these courses and early evidence suggests they are engaging well and making expected progress.
- Almost all students who left at the end of Year 11 were found places in education or training.

The quality of teaching

requires improvement

- Teaching has improved markedly since the last full inspection. It is not yet good or outstanding because strengths are not uniform across the school.
- Teachers generally establish a calm and purposeful atmosphere in lessons where students are keen to learn. Students' improved attitude to learning is helped by the greater use of practical activities and the closer involvement of students in their learning, for example, in mathematics when students play a card game to understand fractions, or in English when they check their own work against their targets.
- All students have their reading, writing and numeracy checked when they enter the school. In the best lessons this information is used to set work that has the right level of challenge. In less successful lessons, teachers' planning does not make clear enough what is being learned from the activity, which results in work being too easy for some students.
- Teachers do not pay sufficient attention to developing students' reading and writing skills in subjects across the school, particularly in food technology and design and technology.
- Students know their learning targets and what they need to do to improve their work. They are encouraged to discuss their work, often in pairs or small groups, which helps them to improve their speaking and listening skills. Marking gives students reasonable feedback on how they can improve their work.
- Learning support assistants make a valuable contribution when they run small groups, for example for literacy or personal, social and health education (PSHE). They are also skilful at prompting and encouraging students to persevere with their work. In some lessons, planning with the teacher has not taken place and it is unclear how learning support assistants are helping students to learn.

The behaviour and safety of pupils requires improvement

- Students' behaviour has improved because the school has strengthened teaching and introduced courses which students find more interesting. It is not yet good because students rely too much on adult help in lessons and do not have sufficient opportunities to take responsibility around the school.
- Students generally get on well with each other and are pleased to talk to visitors about their work. Aggressive incidents do occur, often linked to students' emotional and behavioural difficulties and their inability to control their anger. The school's system of 'restorative justice', whereby students are encouraged to talk about difficulties and to make amends for misbehaviour, helps students to understand their feelings and to control their anger.
- Staff use rewards and praise well to recognise students' efforts and achievements. Students like earning 'points' and 'merit awards' which lead to special rewards, trips out and a mention in assembly. This helps students to feel good about themselves and promotes their social development.
- The number of serious incidents requiring restraint and the rate of exclusions have fallen consistently over the past two years. Students are happier at school and attendance has risen.
- Some students are on the school council and are able to show how their discussions have improved the school by, for example, recommending the installation of a new water fountain or a floodlit aster-turf pitch. Students have few opportunities to take responsibility in other areas of the school's life.
- Students use equipment safely, for example when using Bunsen burners in a science experiment, or tools in design and technology.
- Safeguarding and child protection arrangements meet statutory requirements. Records are kept of different types of bullying and racist incidents as required. Students say that they feel safe and that staff deal with any incidents effectively.

The leadership and management require improvement

- The headteacher and senior leaders are closely involved in all aspects of the school's work. They have a good understanding of the school's strengths and weaker areas and are continually looking for ways to improve its performance.
- Information on students' progress is checked regularly against challenging targets which has helped to raise expectations among staff and the achievement of students.
- Senior leaders have successfully tackled poor teaching since the last inspection. Raising teaching to a good or better standard is less successful, because monitoring does not always produce detailed points for improvement with a short enough timescale for action. Also, the features of the best teaching are not highlighted and shared across the school.
- Improvements have been made to the range of subjects taught. Students study a suitable range of subjects to GCSE level and several follow work-related courses. Residential trips and visits to outdoor pursuits centres help to boost students' self-confidence and play a big part in their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.
- Profitable links have been set up with other schools to improve students' learning, for example, establishing a GCSE course in physical education.
- The local authority has provided good support for several aspects of the school's work. Impact has been strongest in developing staff knowledge of approaches to teaching reading and in helping to measure and check students' progress. It has also given advice to the governing body on how to improve its ability to monitor the school's performance and guided it through the implementation of changes in staffing.
- Teaching is monitored regularly and linked to targets for improving teachers' performance. The

budget has been used prudently to reorganise senior leadership positions and to appoint teachers with specialist subject knowledge.

- Staff receive suitable training, which includes a proper focus on the safe management of students' behaviour. After incidents of challenging behaviour, staff do not always have enough opportunity to discuss the incident and to consider any support they may need.

■ **The governance of the school:**

- Governors have received training on how to better understand the school's strengths and areas for development. They visit the school and are beginning to ask sharper questions about the school's performance
 - Recent changes in the membership of the governing body have affected continuity and effectiveness. Governors are not yet in a position to keep a close enough check on the effectiveness of teaching or the use of resources to raise standards, for example the use of the pupil premium.
 - The governing body fulfils its statutory requirements.
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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

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| Unique reference number | 109394 |
| Social care unique reference number | |
| Local authority | Bristol |
| Inspection number | 397969 |

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.

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| Type of school | Special |
| School category | Community |
| Age range of pupils | 10–16 |
| Gender of pupils | Boys |
| Number of pupils on the school roll | 29 |
| Number of boarders on roll | 27 |
| Appropriate authority | The governing body |
| Chair | Mr Matthew Leighton-Fry |
| Headteacher | Mr Bobby Evans |
| Date of previous school inspection | 19 January 2011 |
| Telephone number | 01249 730407 |
| Fax number | 01249 30007 |
| Email address | head.notton.house.sp@bristol.gov.uk |

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