

Windlehurst School

Hawk Green, Marple, Stockport, Cheshire, SK6 7HZ

Inspection dates 12–13 June 2013

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Satisfactory	3
	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

- Students do not make as much progress as they should, particularly in mathematics during Key Stage 3. Achievements in reading and communication skills do not always match individual student's capabilities.
- The quality of teaching is not consistently good. Students are not expected to learn enough in some lessons and adults sometimes do too much for them.
- In some lessons students' behaviour can have a negative impact on their own and others' learning. This is particularly true of students when they first arrive at the school.
- Too many students have poor attendance and this is the biggest barrier to progress in both their learning and personal development.
- Staff absences have also had a significant effect on students' attitudes and performance.
- Leaders and managers have not been monitoring teacher performance well enough in order to ensure sustained improvement in the quality of teaching.

The school has the following strengths

- The recently formed leadership team is beginning to move the school forward because it has a clear view of the things which must be done to improve teaching and learning.
- The work of the new family engagement team is beginning to improve the attendance of some students.
- Behaviour improves the longer students are in the school, largely due to warm and trusting staff-student relationships.
- The curriculum has improved and gives students good choices to explore subjects which match their needs and interests well and which will help to prepare them for their future lives.

Information about this inspection

- The inspector observed eight lessons or parts of lessons, taught by six teachers and two teaching assistants. Observations were over three sites. Two of the lessons were observed jointly with the headteacher.
- Meetings were held with the headteacher, team leader of the family engagement team and other members of the senior leadership team, members of the governing body and with a small group of students.
- The inspector had telephone conversations with two representatives of the local authority.
- The inspector looked at a range of documents, including those relating to parent links, student progress, attendance, performance management, safeguarding and external advisory visits. Work in students' books was also reviewed.
- There were no responses on the Parent View website but the inspector looked at the results of the school's own survey of parent views.

Inspection team

Hilary Ward, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- Windlehurst School provides for students who have a statement of special educational needs for their behavioural, emotional and social needs. Students are drawn from across the borough of Stockport and may be admitted at any age and at any stage of the school year.
- A large majority of students have additional needs, mainly attention deficit and hyperactivity disorders, autism spectrum conditions, learning and communication difficulties.
- The number of students on roll has increased significantly since the previous inspection and a small number of girls have now been admitted at both key stages.
- All students at Key Stage 3 and a majority of students at Key Stage 4 are eligible for additional funding through the pupil premium and this proportion is very high. Pupil premium is funding provided by the government to support students at risk of under-achieving.
- Key Stage 3 and Key Stage 4 students are on separate sites, some six miles apart. Some Key Stage 4 students are taught for some of the time, by Windlehurst staff, at a sports centre in the community. Most Key Stage 4 students also access alternative provision from a range of providers for some of their education. Providers include Stockport College, Works4U and Mill House Project. Placements are supervised by Windlehurst staff.
- There have been changes in the senior leadership team since the previous inspection.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve teaching in mathematics at Key Stage 3 and in reading and communication across the school, particularly for students new to the school, by:
 - providing more opportunities for students to practise their reading in all subjects
 - ensuring work matches students' abilities and is sufficiently challenging for the more-able students
 - raising expectations of the amount of work students can do in a lesson
 - developing students' resilience to working without adult support for more of the time and to expect them to contribute more in lessons.
- Reduce disruptive behaviour by:
 - reviewing the times at which students are admitted to the school during the year
 - having clear policies and consistent procedures which deal with the use of inappropriate language and which increase students' respect for staff and each other.
- Improve the effectiveness of leadership and management by:
 - developing a performance-management system which ensures speedier improvements in the quality of teaching and learning
 - breaking down data analysis further so that progress in all aspects of literacy and mathematics can be scrutinised more effectively.
- Closely monitor the impact of the work begun by the family engagement team to improve attendance.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils

requires improvement

- Progress in reading, communication and mathematics, especially at Key Stage 3, is too slow from students' starting points, which are typically below and, sometimes, well below those expected for their age on entry to the school. Students are not given enough opportunity to practise their reading and mathematical skills in all subjects.
- Communication skills are not developed well because students too often give only one word answers and are not encouraged enough to verbally express their ideas and opinions more fully. Although students say they do not enjoy writing, a focus on writing has resulted in some improvement in this area.
- In some lessons, expectations of what students can achieve are not high enough. Adults sometimes do too much for them so that students become over-dependent on support and are reluctant to try things for themselves.
- In the better lessons seen, students have good relationships with staff which help them to enjoy lessons so that students are willing to try harder and remain on task. Options lessons are particular favourites because students undertake activities and develop skills in areas which they find especially interesting.
- During the last year students have made good progress in science because teaching has been well matched to students' interests and learning styles. Younger students enjoyed a lesson experimenting with chemical reactions and were able to demonstrate in a later theory lesson that they could remember a great deal of new information.
- There has been a recent focus on ensuring students know and understand what their targets are for learning and behaviour in each lesson. Reflecting on how well they have done is beginning to result in improved learning in lessons. However, sometimes intended learning outcomes are not specific enough to individual students to ensure each makes the best progress they can.
- In Key Stage 4, students follow programmes which are individualised to their needs, both at the school site and with alternative providers. With this range of provision, students are able to study subjects which are of particular interest to them, such as construction, sports science or hairdressing. All leavers gain external awards in English and mathematics at a level appropriate to their individual ability and, additionally, gain a range of qualifications which may be useful to them in their future lives.
- The school provides good support to students when they leave school and almost all progress into continuing education settings.
- There is no difference in the achievement of different groups, including for the very high proportion of students who are eligible for pupil-premium funding and the small number of girls. This reflects the school's commitment to ensuring every student has an equal opportunity.

The quality of teaching

requires improvement

- Although teaching is improving, the quality of lessons is still too variable and not enough is consistently good.
- Too often, students remain on the same task for too long and become bored and disinterested. Sometimes insufficient attention is paid to devising activities which will capture students' interest so that they want to learn and this can result in behaviour breaking down.
- However, when teachers plan tasks which students enjoy, they are able to make rapid progress. For example, in an English lesson, younger students learned a great deal about the characters in the book they were studying, by acting out a scene. The teacher skilfully developed the dialogue to help students express their views as the characters they were portraying.
- Lessons are most usually planned to involve the whole group throughout the session, with insufficient opportunity to work independently and develop literacy, numeracy and other skills at

individual rates. Teaching assistants are not always used as effectively as they might be to support independent learning.

- In the most successful lessons, teachers build well on students' prior learning and provide a range of activities to support new learning. In a Key Stage 4 mathematics lesson, a student was able to achieve a better understanding of percentages by estimating mentally, then using different processes to arrive at an answer and finally checking it with a calculator.
- Teachers mark work regularly but do not consistently refer to the agreed targets or give advice on how students can improve their work to reach them.

The behaviour and safety of pupils

requires improvement

- Behaviour often lets students down. Most students have had poor experiences in previous settings and the school works hard to ensure transitions are as smooth as possible. However, the consistent management of behaviour is badly affected by the admission of students throughout the year, which disrupts the harmony of settled groups.
- Bad language and a lack of mutual respect mar some lessons. Students are often affected by difficulties outside school or by relationships with peers, which can disrupt their own and others' learning. It is noticeable that as students settle into their classes, behaviour begins to improve but behaviour is not always managed consistently enough to help students learn to manage their own behaviour better.
- Students enjoy working for and are motivated by achieving merits, which can result in rewards of trips out of school or participation in favoured activities. They need to reach both learning and behaviour targets to achieve their merits and this contributes to their trying harder to manage their behaviour. The system works well when students feel merits have been awarded fairly.
- Students enjoy good relationships with the majority of adults and all have a key worker. They say they feel safe in school and are able to share concerns with a trusted adult. They understand about different forms of bullying and are confident it will be dealt with.
- Attendance levels are poor and impact significantly on student achievement. Senior leaders and managers have made the decision to invest in the development of a family engagement team supported by pupil-premium funding. The team is focused on improving attendance and this is in the very early stages of showing some positive results.

The leadership and management

requires improvement

- The performance management of teaching and learning is not yet sufficiently well established to focus on raising the quality of teaching to ensure it is consistently good.
- Progress data is monitored and analysed regularly but the school does not yet break down data sufficiently well in order to be clear about progress from starting points in each of the areas of literacy and numeracy.
- There has been some significant disruption to staffing over the last few years. However, the headteacher now has a settled leadership team which is beginning to impact on improvements in learning and behaviour.
- The curriculum ensures a rich and interesting range of activities in school and in the community which contribute well to students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Visitors into school have included prisoners and the drug awareness team. Students enjoy working with disabled students in other schools, at the donkey sanctuary and on Forest School projects.
- Work with parents and other agencies is increasingly effective in involving parents in their child's learning. There are very effective procedures to ensure information is shared by all who need to be included in discussions and planning to meet students' welfare needs.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - The work of the governing body has improved significantly since the last inspection. Governors are fully aware of the strengths of the school and areas which need development. They ensure

that they and the senior leadership team keep priorities for improvement under constant review, as a result of which the school is slowly beginning to improve. There is a shared view about what needs to be done to continue improvement. The governing body have requested more secure information about performance management to raise the quality of teaching and about the impact of actions to improve attendance to ensure pupil-premium funding is being used appropriately. Health and safety and safeguarding are very well monitored.

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	131889
Local authority	Stockport
Inspection number	402513

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	11–16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	45
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Margaret Burns
Headteacher	Lesley Abercromby
Date of previous school inspection	23 September 2009
Telephone number	0161 4274788
Fax number	0161 4845091
Email address	headteacher@windlehurst.stockport.sch.uk

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