

John Watson School

Littleworth Road, Wheatley, Oxford, OX13 1NN

Inspection dates 5–6 November 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 school requires improvement. It is not good because:

- Achievement is not good enough. Too few students make good progress, because not enough teaching is good or better.
- Tasks are not always set at the right level to match each student's needs or abilities and learning does not move on at a quick enough pace.
- The teaching of phonics (matching letters and sounds) is not consistent, and as a result, individual reading skills are not improving fast enough.
- Teachers do not always sufficiently direct and supervise teaching assistants' work. As a result, students' progress slows.
- There are not enough opportunities to practise writing and numeracy skills.
- Behaviour for learning is not good enough, especially where teaching is not sufficiently challenging or exciting.
- Marking and the use of targets do not always show all students how to improve their work.
- Leaders' checks on the impact of teaching on students' achievement have not focused sharply enough on how well different groups are learning or on ensuring that weaknesses identified are quickly resolved.
- Information on how well students learn has not always shown the school's performance clearly enough.
- Those responsible for subjects or year groups do not check the quality of teaching and learning regularly to ensure that progress is consistently good or better.
- Over time, the governing body has not ensured that the school is held fully to account.

The school has the following strengths:

- Since the appointment of new senior leaders, the school is moving forward at a significantly faster pace.
- Children in the Early Years Foundation Stage and students in post-16 achieve well. The sixth form is good.
- Students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is promoted well through opportunities to work with mainstream classmates and in the wider community.
- The restructured governing body is now more effective.

Information about this inspection

- The inspectors observed 18 lessons, including whole lessons and parts of lessons. Over two thirds were conducted jointly with the headteacher and other senior leaders.
- Inspectors took account of the 19 responses to the online survey of parents' and carers' opinions (Parent View). They also looked at the school's own surveys and read comments from letters and emails to the school.
- Meetings were held with various members of staff and representatives from the governing body and the local authority. Telephone discussions were also held with three parents and carers. The inspectors spoke to many students, met with a small group and looked at behaviour in lessons and around the school.
- They also looked at documentation about students' progress, teaching and planning. The school's documents on safeguarding were scrutinised together with records of attendance and students' behaviour.
- The inspectors listened to students reading in lessons and looked at their work, both in lessons and in books from the previous year.
- Inspectors looked at a range of other evidence, including displays, the school's website and evidence representing the school's wider achievements beyond the classroom.

Inspection team

Sonja Joseph, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Kate Robertson

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- John Watson School provides for students who have a range of special educational needs including moderate learning difficulties, severe learning difficulties, autistic spectrum disorders and speech, language and communication needs. A minority of students have profound and multiple learning difficulties. All students have a statement of special educational needs.
- Most students are of White British heritage. There are more boys than girls.
- The proportion of students eligible for the pupil premium is well below average. In this school, this additional funding supports children in the care of the local authority and those known to be eligible for free school meals.
- The proportion of students from ethnic backgrounds other than White British and the proportion who speak English as an additional language are both well below average.
- The school is located on two sites.
- Early Years Foundation Stage children and primary aged pupils share a site with Wheatley Primary School and Wheatley Nursery School. Secondary aged students are housed in a building on the campus of Wheatley Park, a local secondary school.
- The children in the Early Years Foundation Stage are taught alongside mainstream children in Wheatley Nursery School and are dual registered with the nursery school.
- A new headteacher and two new deputy headteachers were appointed in September 2013.
- The governing body was restructured in September 2013 and has a number of new members.
- The school uses a range of college and work placements as alternative provision to support students in Key Stage 4 and in the sixth form.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve teaching so that it is consistently good or better across all key stages, by ensuring that:
 - students' work is always precisely pitched at a level that secures the maximum progress in lessons for each student
 - targets and marking are consistently used appropriately in all lessons so that all students understand clearly what they need to do to improve their work, so that they make rapid gains in their learning
 - teaching assistants are given sufficient direction to effectively support students' learning throughout lessons
 - teaching engages and motivates students so that they always sustain good behaviour in lessons and do not lose focus.
- Improve progress in literacy and numeracy by:
 - establishing a consistent school approach to the learning of phonics and the development of reading skills that takes full account of individual needs
 - providing more opportunities for students to use their numeracy skills to solve problems in mathematics lessons and during work in other subjects
 - making sure that where appropriate students have regular, planned opportunities to practise

writing at length, in all subjects.

■ Strengthen leadership and management by:

- making sure that checks on the quality of teaching and learning are fully focused on how well different groups of pupils learn and are rigorous enough to identify weaknesses and resolve them quickly
- ensuring information collected on the effectiveness of the school's work is summarised more sharply and consistently, so that it is easy to identify trends, strengths and where improvements need to be made
- providing more frequent opportunities for those staff responsible for different age groups or subjects to check on the quality of teaching and learning in their areas of work to ensure progress for all students is consistently good or outstanding
- making sure that the governing body uses information about how well the school is doing more effectively, so that governors can challenge the school's performance to ensure all students achieve well.

An external review of governance should be undertaken in order to assess how this aspect of leadership and management may be improved.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils requires improvement

- Too few students make good progress over time in developing their literacy and numeracy skills from their individual starting points on entry.
- Teaching is not consistently good enough, particularly in Key Stage 1, and therefore students do not achieve sufficiently well.
- Students' progress in numeracy is not fast enough because there are too few opportunities for students to use and apply their skills across all subjects to solve problems to ensure they achieve well.
- Too few students make good enough progress in reading from their individual starting points because the teaching of phonics is variable across classes and year groups.
- Too often, the pace of learning slows because teachers do not always pay enough attention to matching work to students' individual abilities and specific needs, so that work set is neither too hard nor too easy.
- Students' progress in developing their writing skills is not fast enough because they have too few opportunities to practise their skills across the curriculum.
- On occasion progress slows because marking does not always show students how to improve their work, and the use of individual targets to identify clearly to students what they need to learn next is not consistent across all classes.
- Students learn well when teachers have high expectations about what they will learn and a clear structure is used to give plenty of opportunities to practise skills independently. In a post-16 food technology lesson, students made excellent progress in developing self-help and independence skills through learning how to make simple meals.
- Medical, sensory, therapeutic and physical support is effective, particularly in enhancing students' physical development. Primary school sports funding has been used well to ensure all students receive specialist teaching in swimming and engage in a wide range of activities with specialist staff.
- In the best lessons, a range of communication aids is used effectively to support those students with additional speech and language needs and enables them to make good progress. This practice is not universal across the school and, too often, their progress is not fast enough.
- In Key Stage 4, students follow programmes which are individualised to their needs, both at the school site and with alternative providers, and make better progress than at previous key stages. All leavers gain external awards at a level appropriate to their individual ability, including some at GCSE A* to G grades. There is no early entry policy for GCSE examinations.
- Different groups of students make similar progress and there are no significant differences in how well they achieve. This includes boys, girls, disabled students, those who have different special educational needs, students from different ethnic groups and those who speak English as an additional language.
- Pupil premium funds are used effectively to provide well-targeted additional support. As a result, students eligible for free school meals and those who are looked after by the local authority achieve grades at GCSE or levels in national wards in English and mathematics in line with those of their classmates. Students eligible for free school meals make similar progress to their peers.
- Children in the Early Years Foundation Stage achieve well because teaching is consistently good. The majority successfully settle into the school's routines and are well supported by staff.
- Post-16 provision is good because teaching is good. Students develop relevant work-related skills and acquire a wide range of qualifications that match their abilities. They are very well equipped to cope as independently as possible in adult life.
- Some parents and carers expressed concern that their children do not make good progress; inspectors agree.

The quality of teaching**requires improvement**

- Activities in lessons are not always well matched to individual students' abilities or interesting enough to excite and engage all students, especially in Key Stage 1. Consequently, learning slows and students do not consistently make the progress of which they are capable.
- Where students are not motivated by the activity planned, staff do not take effective steps to change tack to re-engage students, including ensuring that support staff are used to maximum effect.
- In mathematics, there is insufficient emphasis on allowing students to work things out for themselves in order to gain confidence in handling numbers through open-ended investigation and problem-solving activities.
- Lesson planning does not always include enough opportunities for students to develop their writing skills across the curriculum.
- The teaching of phonics is not consistently well matched to individual needs, and gaps in the development of skills are sometimes missed.
- Occasionally written marking of students' work does not indicate what to do to improve or is not used effectively to create individual targets for learning, which limits its impact on students' achievement.
- Where teaching is most effective teachers build well on students' prior learning and provide a range of activities to support new learning across all subjects. Particular attention in these lessons is given to developing students' communication skills by providing lots of sensory experiences and practical activities. For instance, in a highly effective Key Stage 2 English lesson, sensory materials and communication aids were used exceptionally well by the teacher to develop students' understanding of changes in temperature. Each student was motivated to participate in an activity, which was fully adapted to their individual interests, so that all remained on task and made excellent progress in their learning.
- Teaching is good in the post-16 provision. The curriculum ensures students learn how to apply their basic skills appropriately. Adults provide very good support as students engage in college placements and interact with the wider community in their leisure pursuits and work experience.
- In the Early Years Foundation Stage, adults' good subject knowledge of the learning and development and welfare requirements ensures all children make good progress in all aspects of their learning.

The behaviour and safety of pupils**require improvement**

- Although the school's records show that serious disruptions to learning are rare, students' behaviour for learning is not good enough in lessons where teaching is less effective.
- Too often tasks are not sufficiently engaging and matched to each student's individual needs and, consequently, too often students lose interest and become restless and less focused, and then do not learn as well as they should. Where teaching is good or outstanding, students remain engaged and their behaviour is good.
- Behaviour outside of lessons and off site in the alternative provision is consistently better.
- Skilful planning and use of adapted resources to help less mobile pupils and the strong contribution of therapy staff have ensured that lessons are rarely disrupted due to the personal needs of students with physical disabilities.
- Students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is well promoted through opportunities at all key stages to work and play with their mainstream classmates.
- The new headteacher has created a positive atmosphere across the school. Staff show very high levels of care and concern for each student, and spend considerable time supporting their

physical, emotional and social well-being. Relationships with students are strong, which helps the staff to be sensitive to small changes in their well-being, and to provide speedy support if necessary.

- Students say they love their school. They are polite, respectful to each other and to adults, and they feel extremely safe and well cared for. They say their teachers are always willing to listen to them if they have any concerns and act quickly if they do.
- Most students have a good understanding of what bullying is and the different forms it may take, including cyber bullying and homophobia. They say that it does happen occasionally in the school but are confident that staff deal with it quickly.
- Students' independence and responsibility are well promoted throughout the school. Older students enjoy the opportunities to demonstrate their independence through cooking meals, shopping, attending college and undertaking work placements in the local community.

The leadership and management require improvement

- The process for checking the school's performance was previously not robust and was too generous. Information on how well students were learning was not always accurate in relation to national expectations of progress.
- Following the appointment of the new headteacher and deputy headteachers, a great number of changes were introduced, some of which have already started to improve students' learning and progress. In particular information on how well students learn and achieve is now more robust and accurate. However, many of these new initiatives have not yet been fully implemented and, therefore, it is too soon to measure the impact.
- Over time, checks made by senior leaders and managers on the quality of teaching have not focused sharply enough on how well different groups of pupils are learning or on resolving weaknesses quickly. As a result, the quality of teaching still varies across some key stages.
- The headteacher and deputy headteachers have a clear understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses and suitable plans to improve the school further. Nevertheless, information on the school's performance is still not always well enough summarised to provide a clear, sharp overview of trends, strengths and where improvements need to be made, to ensure different groups of students are making as much progress as possible.
- Staff responsible for subjects or year groups do not have enough opportunities to check the quality of teaching and learning in their areas of work to ensure all students make rapid gains in their learning.
- The new senior leaders have harnessed the support of the local authority well, and used external partnerships with local schools very effectively to help raise the quality of teaching. The weakest teaching has been tackled vigorously and been considerably reduced.
- There is an appropriate link between progressing teachers up the pay scale with their performance. The proportion of good teaching is improving. Consequently, students' progress is improving. These successes reveal the school's capacity to improve.
- There are insufficient opportunities across subjects to fully develop individual literacy and numeracy skills. Otherwise, the curriculum broadly meets the needs and abilities of students. A wide range of trips, visits, sporting events, clubs and opportunities to learn alongside their mainstream classmates in the adjacent nursery, primary and secondary schools, promote well students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.
- All staff are committed to creating equality of opportunity, tackling any discrimination and improving life chances for their students. Relationships in the school are good.
- Senior leaders have ensured that additional funding has been targeted appropriately to ensure students who are eligible for pupil premium achieve at similar levels to their classmates.
- School leaders and governors have effectively used the new primary sports funding to provide

specialist teachers to work with the students and provide training for teachers. Consequently, all students participate keenly in the many physical and sporting activities, such as the 'wake up and shake' programme, which have a positive impact on students' health and physical and mental well-being.

- Safeguarding procedures fully meet requirements.
- Some parents and carers expressed concern that leadership and management of the school were not good enough, and inspectors agree.
- The local authority fully recognises that it did not provide effective support to the school until fairly recently. It now provides appropriately close support.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - The governing body was reformed in September 2013 following a review of its effectiveness, as not all statutory duties were carried out by the governing body to the required time scales. Members of the restructured governing body have taken effective steps to put this right, and they now offer increasingly effective support and challenge to senior leaders. Governors are aware that they have not challenged enough the progress information presented or questioned the current inconsistencies in teaching. Members of the governing body have supported the headteacher in redefining the management structure of the school and ensuring that salaries are clearly linked to improvements in students' progress and the quality of teaching. Members have a secure understanding of how the pupil premium funding has been used to provide additional support and resources that have resulted in those students eligible achieving in line with their classmates. They have ensured that all of the requirements for safeguarding are met.

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	123333
Local authority	Oxfordshire
Inspection number	426396

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	2–19
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 sixth form	15
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Caroline Griffiths
Headteacher	Stephen Passey
Date of previous school inspection	13–14 September 2011
Telephone number	01865 452725
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Email address	headteacher@johnwatsonschool.org

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