

# Watling View School

Watling View, St Albans, AL1 2NU

**Inspection dates** 30–31 January 2014

| <b>Overall effectiveness</b>   | Previous inspection: | Satisfactory                | 3        |
|--------------------------------|----------------------|-----------------------------|----------|
|                                | This inspection:     | <b>Requires improvement</b> | <b>3</b> |
| Achievement of pupils          |                      | Requires improvement        | 3        |
| Quality of teaching            |                      | Requires improvement        | 3        |
| Behaviour and safety of pupils |                      | Good                        | 2        |
| 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

- Pupils do not make consistently good progress. At Key Stage 2, they have not all made enough progress in the past in their communication and literacy skills.
- Too much of the teaching requires improvement and teachers' expectations are not always high enough.
- Several teachers with key leadership roles took over their responsibilities very recently. Although they are enthusiastic and developing their leadership skills, it is too soon for them to have had a clear impact on school improvement.

### The school has the following strengths

- The headteacher and senior leaders provide good leadership for the school. They are working systematically to improve teaching and raise achievement.
- As a result, the amount of progress pupils make is improving and there is now some outstanding teaching.
- Children make good progress in the Early Years Foundation Stage because teaching there is good.
- The sixth form is good. It provides students with a range of meaningful activities that prepare them well for the future.
- Pupils behave well and feel safe in school. They make good progress in their personal development and enjoy warm relationships with the staff.
- The governing body is well informed about the work of the school and is contributing effectively to its development.

## Information about this inspection

- The inspectors observed 13 lessons, all jointly with the headteacher or deputy headteacher. They also observed a session in the hydrotherapy pool led by a visiting drama group and sampled a number of young enterprise sessions in the sixth form.
- Meetings were held with leaders, and with the Chair and Vice Chair of the Governing Body. A telephone discussion took place with a representative of the local authority.
- The inspectors considered 39 responses to the online survey (Parent View), letters received from a very few parents and 61 completed staff questionnaires.
- The inspectors observed the school's work and looked at a range of documentation, including its self-evaluation records and checks on teachers' work, records of pupils' progress and their behaviour, samples of pupils' work, and documents relating to safeguarding.

## Inspection team

Margaret Goodchild, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Aileen Thomas

Additional Inspector

## Full report

### Information about this school

- Watling View provides for pupils with severe learning difficulties and those with profound and multiple learning difficulties. About a third of the pupils also have autistic spectrum disorders.
- All pupils have a statement of special educational needs.
- An average proportion of the pupils are supported through the pupil premium, which is government funding for children who are looked after by the local authority or who are known to be eligible for free school meals.
- The proportions of pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds and those who speak English as an additional language are broadly average.
- A number of pupils attend additional offsite provision for part of their time. This includes time spent at Aldenham Country Park, Oaklands College and Burston's Garden Centre (for work-related learning), Earthworks (for horticulture), Westminster Lodge (for swimming and to use the climbing wall), Nuffield Health Club and Harpenden Leisure Centre (for swimming), and Digswell and Gaddesdon Riding for the Disabled.
- Two teachers from the school provide outreach support on two days a week, supporting up to 57 local primary schools, on behalf of the local authority.
- The school has been a lead partner in a number of initiatives in Preparing for Adulthood as part of the local authority's work on Educational Health and Social Care Plans.
- Since the previous inspection, there has been a significant turnover of staff. Five teachers joined the school in September 2013 and a new assistant headteacher took up post in November 2013.

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

- Make sure that teaching is consistently at least good and increase the proportion of pupils who make rapid progress by:
  - raising teachers' expectations so that they all challenge pupils to learn as much as they can in lessons
  - always providing pupils with stimulating activities
  - making sure that pupils in all year groups, and especially at Key Stage 2, have regular opportunities to develop their literacy and communication skills.
- Strengthen leadership and management by:
  - making sure that staff who have recently taken on responsibility for aspects of the school's work have a clear overview of strengths and areas for development in their areas
  - holding those with responsibilities to account for contributing to improving the quality of teaching and raising pupils' achievement
  - introducing regular meetings where teachers and senior leaders discuss how much progress each pupil is making.

## Inspection judgements

### The achievement of pupils requires improvement

- Pupils' achievement requires improvement because they do not make consistently good progress. As a result of their learning difficulties, pupils' attainment on entry is low and remains so. Most pupils make the amount of progress expected in Key Stages 1 to 4, but there are not yet enough pupils making better than expected progress for achievement to be good.
- Since the previous inspection, some pupils at Key Stage 2 have made less progress than they should have done in communication and literacy. The school is working to raise their achievement and is beginning to see some improvement. Many pupils make good progress in numeracy, but they tend to do better at Key Stages 3 and 4 than at Key Stage 2.
- The progress pupils make in lessons ranges from outstanding to requiring improvement. In lessons where progress requires improvement, this is generally because pupils spend too long on activities that offer limited learning opportunities or because they do not have the chance to apply their skills. As a result, they do not extend their knowledge and understanding.
- Pupils with profound and multiple learning difficulties make good progress. There are no significant differences between the achievement of other groups of pupils, including those with severe learning difficulties and autistic spectrum disorders. Pupils of minority ethnic heritage and those who are learning English as an additional language make similar progress to their classmates. In some lessons, more-able pupils are not challenged as much as they could be, but at other times they make good progress where work provides the right level of difficulty for them.
- The attainment and progress of pupils for whom the school receives pupil premium funding was not markedly different from the rest of the pupils in English and mathematics 2013. The school is sharpening the way it tracks the progress of pupils who are supported through the pupil premium and increasing the range of support provided for them.
- Children in the Early Years Foundation Stage make good progress, especially in their personal, social and emotional development, physical development and in communication. Those who are more able are learning to recognise symbols and letters and find out about numbers, and all children are developing their listening skills well.
- In the sixth form, students achieve well because activities are interesting, linked well to everyday life and to work-related learning. They make good progress in developing their independence skills, such as learning to travel on their own, and finding out the basics of shopping and handling money. They make good progress in the activities they undertake at the offsite provision and this contributes to their knowledge of the world of work. By the time they leave, students gain a number of Assessment and Qualifications Alliance (AQA) unit awards.
- Pupils make good progress in developing their physical and sporting skills. For example, pupils with profound and multiple learning difficulties have very good opportunities to take part in swimming and hydrotherapy. Other pupils learn a range of skills that contribute to their physical performance, health and well-being.
- Pupils' enjoyment of school and positive attitudes make a good contribution to their learning and to the progress they make in many lessons.

**The quality of teaching requires improvement**

- Teaching requires improvement, including in English and mathematics, because teachers' expectations are not always high enough. For example, they sometimes give pupils activities that offer limited opportunities for learning, do not broaden pupils' horizons or instil in them an enthusiasm for learning. Sometimes they do not provide enough opportunities for pupils to develop their communication and literacy skills.
- In an information and communication technology lesson that required improvement, pupils found out how to switch on pieces of equipment but did not go on to use them in a meaningful way. For example, a more-able pupil who explored the controls on a simple camera had no opportunity to take any photographs or to see them printed in order to develop his skills and understanding. Pupils repeated similar activities throughout the lesson and made only limited progress.
- In a literacy lesson that required improvement, pupils listened to a story that was suited to much younger children. They then moved on to making marks, using crayons, paint or foam, but were given no clear purpose for this activity. The expectations of the teacher and teaching assistants were too low. Although pupils were kept engaged in what they were doing effectively, the lesson was dull and provided little opportunity for learning.
- Teaching in the sixth form is good overall. Teachers provide students with a variety of interesting activities that meet their needs well, but there is still some teaching that requires improvement. In these lessons, the expectations of teachers and teaching assistants are not as high as they should be. As a result, students are not always pushed to learn as much as could or to refine their skills.
- There has been an improvement in the quality of teaching since the previous inspection and there is now some that is outstanding. Throughout the school, teachers generally make good use of a range of methods for communicating with pupils, including signing, use of pictures and symbols, and objects to represent words and ideas.
- Teaching is good in the Early Years Foundation Stage, with some that is outstanding. Activities are varied and children learn in a stimulating and attractive learning environment. Staff carefully observe children's development and keep detailed records of their achievement, including in their learning journals.
- Where teaching was outstanding in a lesson in the Early Years Foundation Stage, the teacher and teaching assistants worked as a seamless team, creating an exciting learning experience for the children. The story of *The Three Little Pigs* was told dramatically and brought to life by the use of objects from the story, including straw and sticks, together with sound effects. Printed words and symbols, as well as the use of switches, promoted children's literacy development and their communication exceptionally well.
- In an outstanding mathematics lesson at Key Stage 3, pupils with severe autistic spectrum disorders worked individually with the teacher and teaching assistants on their specific targets. The excellent management of their behaviour, using rewards and tightly structured activities, kept them fully engaged throughout. All the staff were very clear about the pupils' targets as well as being able to adapt activities and the choice of equipment to enable them to succeed.

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

- The behaviour of pupils is good. The school is an orderly community, and pupils enjoy warm and

trusting relationships with the staff who work with them.

- Pupils behave well in lessons, around the building and at lunchtimes. They have good attitudes to learning and where teaching is at its best, show tremendous enjoyment in learning. This was evident in an outstanding lesson in the Early Years Foundation Stage, which children clearly found exciting, and in the joy experienced by pupils who were part of the drama activity led by visiting specialists.
- The school has a very effective behaviour policy and revises its procedures regularly. Staff are trained thoroughly in how to manage pupils who have behavioural difficulties, and instances of challenging behaviour are managed consistently well. Improvements in behaviour since the previous inspection have resulted in a dramatic decrease in the number of occasions where staff have needed to restrain pupils physically: such occasions are now very rare.
- Some outstanding support takes place where individual teaching assistants work with pupils with the most severe autistic spectrum disorders, skilfully managing their behaviour and enabling them to remain calm and stay on task. This makes a major contribution to pupils' personal development as well as their learning.
- There have been no recorded incidents of bullying or racist behaviour since the previous inspection, and the school helps pupils to understand how to behave towards one another through its emphasis on 'the community code'. This encourages pupils to 'be safe, be kind, be responsible, be your best'. Where a pupil makes the wrong choice and does not live up to this expectation, staff are highly skilled in raising their awareness of how they might change their behaviour.
- The school's work to keep pupils safe and secure is good. The school conducts careful risk assessments for all off-site activities and keeps a close check on this provision to make sure pupils are safe. Parents are nearly all confident that their children are secure and the school does all it can to make pupils aware about how to avoid possible danger, including through using pictures to help them to understand the importance of safety.
- The rate of attendance has improved since the previous inspection and is now above average for schools of this type. The school has robust procedures in place to promote good attendance and works closely with external agencies where necessary.
- On occasion where teaching requires improvement, some individual pupils lose concentration and interest in the activities, though their behaviour rarely disturbs the learning of the rest of the class because it is quickly managed by the staff.

### **The leadership and management**

### **requires improvement**

- Leadership and management require improvement because several staff with responsibilities for important aspects of the school's work, such as key stages and some subjects, took up post very recently. They have been attending training to increase their leadership skills and are beginning to introduce some improvements, but it is too soon for them to have had an impact on teaching or pupils' achievement. They do not all have a clear overview yet of the strengths and weaknesses in their areas
- Staff who have taken over responsibility for leading the Early Years Foundation Stage and the sixth form are still developing their roles, so leadership in these areas requires improvement. The quality of provision in these key stages is, nevertheless, good because senior leaders have ensured that the school has successfully sustained and built on strengths identified in both areas

at the time of the previous inspection.

- The headteacher and deputy headteacher provide good leadership for the school, ably supported by the newly appointed assistant headteacher. Senior leaders have established a culture where staff are motivated and want to contribute to school improvement.
- Since the previous inspection, senior leaders have successfully tackled inadequate teaching and supported teachers in developing their skills so that there are now examples of outstanding teaching. Partly because several teachers joined the school only a few months ago, work to bring all teaching up to at least a good level is ongoing.
- The school has greatly improved the information it collects about pupils' attainment and progress, and is sharpening the way it sets targets for pupils. This is enabling leaders to identify quickly which pupils are doing well and which ones need additional help. It also supports the school in providing pupils with equal opportunities and tackling discrimination. Teachers are now aware of how well their pupils are doing but they do not yet meet with senior leaders to account for the progress each pupil is making.
- The school provides a variety of stimulating activities that enrich pupils' learning, including visits out, residential trips, special events and workshops, and those provided by visiting specialists. These experiences contribute well to pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. During the inspection, sessions in the hydrotherapy pool led by a visiting drama group provided pupils with a magical experience that appealed to all their senses. The day-to-day curriculum meets pupils' personal development needs well but it does not provide as many exciting learning opportunities as it could.
- A wide range of opportunities is provided for students in the sixth form. The school listens very carefully to students' own thoughts, feelings and aspirations for the future, and uses these to plan individual pathways and learning opportunities. These include travel training and the development of independence skills. Staff are highly sensitive to students' needs in the way they plan for them to make the transition on to college or other placements when they leave school. They work closely with other agencies to provide students with the best possible advice.
- The school provides a variety of physical opportunities for pupils and is making good use of the primary school sport funding to extend these. It is using its funding so that more-able pupils take part in tournaments with other schools, to provide rock climbing and yoga, and to extend residential opportunities that include camping and adventurous outdoor activities. The use of sports coaches and training for teachers are planned to further enhance pupils' learning.
- The school works very well in partnership with parents. It keeps them closely informed about their children's development and most parents who expressed their views are very positive about the quality of education provided. The school works closely with other schools and has received positive feedback from primary schools to which it provides outreach support.
- The local authority has provided good support to the school and has an accurate knowledge of its effectiveness. In particular, it has provided advice on how to improve provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage, undertaken school reviews and worked with senior leaders in analysing information about pupils' progress and in checking on the quality of teaching.
- **The governance of the school:**
  - Governance has improved since the previous inspection and the governing body is now knowledgeable about the work of the school. Governors are realistic in their judgement about the school's effectiveness, recognising that there is much that is good but that more work

needs to be done in some areas. They are well aware of how much progress pupils are making, including those for whom the school receives pupil premium funding, and make sure that the funding is spent appropriately. Governors undertake a number of visits with a wide-ranging focus, including observing lessons and meeting with members of staff in subjects or aspects with which they are linked. Governors are well informed about how teachers' performance is managed and, in particular, how weaknesses in teaching have been tackled. They provide a good balance of support and challenge, asking probing questions and holding senior leaders to account. They are passionate about Watling View and contribute well to school improvement. They ensure that safeguarding requirements are fully 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

|                                |               |
|--------------------------------|---------------|
| <b>Unique reference number</b> | 117683        |
| <b>Local authority</b>         | Hertfordshire |
| <b>Inspection number</b>       | 430757        |

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>                    | 2–19                           |
| <b>Gender of pupils</b>                       | Mixed                          |
| <b>Gender of pupils in the sixth form</b>     | Mixed                          |
| <b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>    | 85                             |
| <b>Of which, number on roll in sixth form</b> | 21                             |
| <b>Appropriate authority</b>                  | The governing body             |
| <b>Chair</b>                                  | Jim Scivyer                    |
| <b>Headteacher</b>                            | Tom Jackson-Owens              |
| <b>Date of previous school inspection</b>     | 8 March 2012                   |
| <b>Telephone number</b>                       | 01727 850560                   |
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