

Woodlawn School

Drumoyne Gardens, West Monkseaton, Whitley Bay, NE25 9DL

Inspection dates 10–11 June 2014

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Good	2
	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

- The school has experienced a turbulent period brought about by high absence from a number of key roles throughout the school. This includes at leadership, management and governance levels.
- Inconsistency in the quality of teaching has resulted in some variability in pupils' progress and achievement. Some pupils achieve well but the progress of others requires improvement.
- Activities and resources used in lessons do not always engage all pupils in their learning; some lose interest and make slower progress as a result.
- Support staff do not all effectively develop pupils' learning.
- Existing and more recently appointed staff and governors have taken on new or additional temporary roles to cover for others' absences. They do not all have the necessary skills and attributes to assure these responsibilities, especially at middle leader and governance levels.
- Although a number of changes and improvements have been made in the school, insufficient time has elapsed to see their full impact within Woodlawn.

The school has the following strengths

- Positive and robust leadership is now in place and is securely driving improvements.
- Parents have trust in the staff; they are pleased with the school's work and how it is developing.
- Since the last inspection, attendance has improved significantly.
- Staff are committed to developing their own skills and providing the best experiences for all pupils.
- Increasing numbers of students gain a qualification by the time they leave the school.
- Pupils say that they are happy in school and understand how to keep themselves safe.

Information about this inspection

- The inspectors observed six lessons. They also made a number of shorter visits to classrooms and other areas of learning. They conducted three joint lesson observations, two with the acting headteacher and one with the executive headteacher. Work scrutiny and a joint learning walk were completed with the acting headteacher.
- Discussions were held with members of the governing body, pupils, senior leaders, staff and two representatives of the local authority.
- A range of school documents was examined including the school improvement plan, the school's data about pupils' achievement, records relating to behaviour, safeguarding, attendance and the minutes of the governing body.
- There were 14 responses to the online questionnaire (Parent View) which were considered along with parental survey information from the school. The team also received individual submissions from parents during the inspection. There were 20 responses to the staff questionnaire which were also taken into account by inspectors.

Inspection team

Michele Crichton, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Frank Cain

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- Woodlawn is an all-age school for pupils with a broad range of physical, medical and sensory special educational needs. It has designation for 2–19-year-old provision.
- Pupils can join the school at any time of the school year, following the outcomes of the Education, Health and Care Plan / Statutory assessment process for pupils with special educational needs.
- Very young children often enter the assessment unit within the Early Years Foundation Stage as part of these assessment processes. They can remain at this school, or move on to other schools, once the assessment is complete.
- Many of the older pupils are admitted later, with autistic spectrum-type difficulties or mental health problems. These admission patterns mean numbers can fluctuate.
- Pupils are drawn mainly from across North Tyneside local authority, although small numbers may also come from neighbouring local authorities. Almost all are of White British heritage.
- The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for the pupil premium, which provides additional funding for pupils known to be eligible for free school meals or in local authority care, is above average.
- In 2012 the whole school was badly flooded, resulting in £276,000 damage and the temporary relocation of pupils.
- In September 2013, the deputy headteacher went on 12-month maternity leave. The assistant headteacher was promoted to acting deputy headteacher but was then absent from November 2013 until April 2014, when she resigned her post. In January 2014, the secondment of a deputy headteacher from an outstanding special school was made to the leadership team.
- The headteacher of the school has been absent from work since March 2014. The substantive deputy headteacher returned from maternity leave to act as head of school. She returned to maternity leave in May 2014 and the seconded deputy headteacher was promoted to acting head of school. A National Leader of Education was put in place from April 2014 to provide strategic leadership in an executive headteacher role. The revised leadership team consists of an executive headteacher, acting head of school and acting deputy headteacher. The substantive deputy headteacher attends for strategic meetings and is due to return fully to school in July 2014.
- Since the last inspection, a new Chair and vice chair of the Governing Body have been appointed. In summer 2013, the Chair of the Governing Body took maternity leave.
- Another change since the last inspection is that there is now a large multi-disciplinary team on site which includes occupational therapy, speech and language, educational psychology and teachers of the hearing impaired and visually impaired.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve teaching to be good or better so that all groups of pupils make at least consistently good progress by:
 - making sure that work given to pupils matches their abilities so that all, particularly the most able, are effectively challenged in their learning
 - enabling pupils to be more engaged and active learners, especially in mathematics, through providing stimulating, interesting and practical activities
 - ensuring that support staff have the appropriate skills and knowledge to develop all pupils' learning.
- Further strengthen the impact of leadership at all levels, including governance, by:

- developing the role of subject leaders so that they provide more effective support to teachers
- ensuring appropriate training for middle managers so that they are rigorous in the monitoring of the quality of teaching, support and subjects
- ensuring that governors acquire an accurate understanding of whole-school issues and how these affect pupils' progress and well-being.
- Improve behaviour and safety by ensuring that:
 - all staff are consistent in their use of rewards and sanctions for different types of behaviour
 - pupils understand the rewards and sanctions within the school.

An external review of governance and of the school's use of the pupil premium should be undertaken in order to assess how these aspects of leadership and management may be improved.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils

requires improvement

- Due to their complex learning difficulties, pupils join the school with skills and knowledge well below those that are typical for their age.
- Achievement requires improvement because progress in reading, writing and mathematics is inconsistent across year groups and key stages in the school. Usually it is stronger for post-16 students.
- Inconsistencies in the presence of teaching staff, the monitoring of teaching and subjects by key leaders, and variability in the quality of teaching and support of existing staff have led to uneven progress across the school. Strategies are now in place to fully address all these issues but insufficient time has elapsed to review their impact.
- Progress is variable but it is generally slower in mathematics than in English. This is due to staff absence, resulting in inconsistency in teaching and lack of a leader to monitor the subject.
- Pupils' progress is now beginning to improve. There has been an increasing upward trend in progress over the past year, especially in reading, because staff encourage pupils to enjoy and read books, regardless of ability.
- Better progress in reading has also been as a result of additional support for pupils through the use of the pupil premium funding. Those pupils who are supported by the pupil premium have made consistently better progress in reading, writing and mathematics than other pupils in the school. However, leaders have not tracked the funding's use for other initiatives in the school or assessed its real value to pupils' achievement.
- More robust tracking systems are now in place to enable a more accurate view of progress across the school. This is also allowing staff to plan more effectively for the next steps in learning. Systematic checking is skilfully carried out, for example, in the Early Years Foundation Stage. Regular observations of incremental steps in progress are recorded. Staff know the children well and support their needs appropriately in a caring and nurturing environment. This enables them to make appropriate progress.
- In the sixth form, the curriculum is appropriately accredited and enables all students to achieve qualifications. A review is currently under way to extend all students' options and to ensure that students follow pathways that are more focused to their aptitude and ability, especially for the most able.
- Pupils can achieve accreditation in English, mathematics and science at GCSE. Predominantly, pupils achieve Level 1 and Level 2 Functional skills and ASDAN accreditations. The majority of pupils go to Tyne Metropolitan College to continue with Life Skills courses; occasionally, they go to Newcastle College to complete catering courses.

The quality of teaching requires improvement

- The quality of teaching is variable across the school. Not enough is consistently good to ensure that pupils make good progress in all year groups and subjects.
- Support staff are not all well deployed in lessons to support pupils. Some demonstrate a wide range of skills that help to develop pupils' reading, writing, communication and mathematics well. Many probing questions are asked and pupils respond well to the challenge. However, some staff accept poor-quality responses and superficial answers to their questions, and do not have high expectations of the quality of the work that pupils complete.
- Pupils' books and files also show that the quality of marking and the activities that they do, varies between subjects and key stages. In some year groups, there is too much reliance on using worksheets to develop concepts and skills for mathematics. Some workbooks show that, as the academic year has advanced, those who are most able, have not made the best possible progress of which they are capable.
- In English, there is not usually the same reliance on worksheets but pupils are restricted to a limited range of repeated activities to develop their abilities. In these instances, learning is dull and repetitive for pupils and work may be left unfinished.
- Conversely, there are examples of good progress over the year where pupils' skills, understanding and abilities have developed well through focused marking and stimulating activities. An information and communication technology lesson in the sixth form demonstrates the better elements of teaching currently in Woodlawn. In this example, all students, regardless of ability, were actively engaged in their own learning; pace and support were focused and adaptable to the different levels of ability, and students could see the relevance of their learning.
- Focused monitoring of teaching is now in place, together with additional training for all staff. This is proving effective, as good teaching and learning were observed during the inspection. This is also captured in the log of lessons observed by senior leaders.

The behaviour and safety of pupils require improvement

- The behaviour of pupils requires improvement. Many have positive attitudes to learning and try to do their best. However, in some lessons where work set for pupils is not well matched to their abilities, pupils sometimes lose interest, which causes some low-level disruption to both their own progress and that of others.
- Pupils are generally polite, friendly and welcoming. Older students show much independence, which staff encourage. This was evident during observations at lunchtimes and as students moved around the school. The behaviour of pupils is generally positive throughout the school.
- When speaking to pupils about behaviour, they themselves say that behaviour in school is 'good sometimes' but 'not as good as it could be'. Pupils are aware of the importance of e-safety, say that they feel safe in school and that there is no bullying.
- The school's work to keep pupils safe and secure requires improvement. Although the school's behaviour policy has been revised, there is a lack of consistency in the behaviour management of teachers and support staff. For example, praise and rewards that are given to pupils in one class are overlooked in another. Similarly, misdemeanours that are checked by staff in a particular classroom have no consequences in another.
- The school keeps a wide range of documents relating to pupils' behaviour, including classroom or lunchtime incidents and racist incident logs. All of these are appropriately maintained.
- Importantly, attendance has risen and is now above that for similar special schools.

The leadership and management require improvement

- The revised senior leadership team and governors have worked well with the local authority to secure improvements to the school. They have used links with other local schools to provide

expertise to assist in this process. However, leadership and management overall still require improvement because inconsistencies currently remain within the school, predominantly in the quality of teaching. Improvement is also needed in the role that subject leaders play in supporting staff and helping to improve the quality of teaching, as this is underdeveloped.

- Through considered analysis of all aspects of Woodlawn, the senior leadership team has a clear view of the school. This has resulted in the creation of a detailed and well-considered school improvement plan. This shows that there is every indication that leaders and managers have the necessary capacity to achieve the improvements required.
- Systems for collecting and recording information about pupils' progress are getting better and an analysis to improve all pupils' achievement is already in place. This information is being used to identify and address underachievement. This example demonstrates the school's commitment to ensure all pupils have equality of opportunity.
- The curriculum meets requirements. Its focus is on ensuring independence and skill enhancement at an individual pupil level, year-on-year. A review of the curriculum is currently under way.
- The school makes an effective contribution to pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Staff make sure that pupils know right from wrong, are considerate and polite, and develop their spiritual awareness through, for example, thought-provoking assemblies.
- The school works well with parents and carers, and makes sure that they are well informed through regular newsletters, home-school diaries and regular consultations. Parents and carers who responded to the online Parent View survey unanimously agreed that they would recommend the school to others. Individual parents praised the school to the inspection team.
- The sports funding that the school receives has been used well. A highly experienced, specialist physical education teacher is employed to work alongside all primary staff, including teaching assistants. She contributes well to the professional development of teachers. Pupils thoroughly enjoy the lessons led by the specialist and also relish the opportunity to participate in a wide range of sporting activities and tournaments.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - Members of the governing body are committed to the school; they are now attending meetings regularly and have ensured that safeguarding procedures are effective. As the members of staff are developing stronger skill sets, so too is the governing body. Governors are now using the information they receive from the school to challenge and ask more probing questions about the performance of the school to senior leaders. They have a clearer view of the quality of teaching, performance measurement issues and what difference the pupil premium funding is making to pupils' outcomes. However, there are still more improvements to be made, particularly in governors' understanding of how whole-school issues affect pupils' achievement and well-being. Governors recognise this.

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	108652
Local authority	North Tyneside
Inspection number	427157

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	2–18
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in the sixth form	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	108
Of which, number on roll in sixth form	18
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Susie Young
Headteacher	Nichola Aldcroft (Acting headteacher)
Date of previous school inspection	17 November 2010
Telephone number	0191 6432590
Fax number	0191 6432587
Email address	nichola.aldcroft@ntlp.org.uk

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