

# River House School

Stratford Road, Henley-in-Arden, B95 6AD

**Inspection dates** 20–21 May 2015

<b>Overall effectiveness</b>	Previous inspection:	Requires improvement	3
	This inspection:	<b>Inadequate</b>	<b>4</b>
Leadership and management		Inadequate	4
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Inadequate	4
Quality of teaching		Inadequate	4
Achievement of pupils		Inadequate	4

## Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

### This is a school that requires special measures.

- Leaders and governors have not tackled the weaknesses identified at the last inspection. They have not improved the quality of teaching or linked judgements about the performance of teachers to the progress of students.
- Achievement, including that of students supported through the pupil premium, is inadequate in both key stages.
- The school does not have enough information on students' attainment or needs on which to base accurate assessments of their progress.
- Too few students make the progress they should, including in reading, writing and mathematics. In particular, the most-able students do not make enough progress. This is because teaching does not take sufficient account of what these students already know and does not challenge them to achieve even more.
- While older students take a range of courses, very few achieve qualifications which employers will value. This is because teachers' expectations are too low.
- Subject leaders do not know how to check the quality of teaching and students' progress accurately.
- Behaviour in lessons and around the school is poor and has a negative impact on learning. The school keeps records of behaviour incidents, and of occasions when staff have to physically intervene to keep students safe, but does not analyse these effectively to identify why they are occurring and to plan ways forward.
- The curriculum, especially in Key Stage 3, does not engage students' interest or extend their learning sufficiently. It does not meet their special educational needs.
- Attendance is very low across the school. Poor attendance prevents many students from making better progress. Leaders have not developed effective systems to address this problem. Some students are kept on part-time timetables by the school for too long.
- Until very recently school leaders have not ensured that a safe environment is provided for students.
- Governors have not been aware of the weaknesses in the school. They have not challenged decisions made about teachers' pay rises. They have not held senior leaders sufficiently to account for the impact of their work to improve the school.

### The school has the following strengths

- The interim consultant executive headteacher is very clear about what needs to be done. He has quickly ensured that students are safe in school.
- Most staff have positive views about working in the school.
- Support staff show great commitment in their work to assist teachers with students' behaviour and learning.
- Students enjoy and benefit from the outdoor learning experiences they are offered.

## Information about this inspection

- The inspection team visited classrooms at the main school site and in Warwick, to observe teaching and learning and look at students’ work. They also considered information about the progress of students attending other sites, including outdoor learning.
- Several lessons were jointly observed with the interim consultant executive headteacher and assistant headteacher. Inspectors also observed students and spoke to them during the school day, including when they arrived in the morning and at break and lunchtime.
- Inspectors met with the interim consultant executive headteacher and assistant headteacher to discuss important aspects of the school’s work. They also met with the Chair and three members of the governing body, and held a discussion with a representative of the local authority.
- The inspection team looked at a number of documents, including those relating to keeping students safe. The team looked at information about attendance, exclusions and behaviour and about students’ achievement and attainment. They also looked at the school’s website, the improvement plan and records of local authority reviews and support.
- Inspectors analysed the responses from 11 staff to the Ofsted questionnaire. There were insufficient responses from parents to Parent View, Ofsted’s online survey, from which to draw conclusions.

## Inspection team

Lynda Morgan, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Janet Tomkins

Additional Inspector

## Full report

*In accordance with the Education Act 2005, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector is of the opinion that this school requires special measures because it is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the persons responsible for leading, managing or governing the school are not demonstrating the capacity to secure the necessary improvement in the school.*

### Information about this school

- River House is a special school based on three sites. Most students in Key Stage 3 are taught in small class groups on the main school site in Henley-in-Arden. About a third, most of whom are in Years 10 and 11, are based at the school's other sites in Warwick (Warwick Space) and in Coventry (Camp Hill Community and Youth Centre). Although these sites are called 'alternative provision' by the school, both are managed by the school and include vocational and outdoor learning facilities.
- Students at Warwick Space and at Camp Hill follow individual 'independent' learning programmes planned specifically for them. Some follow part-time programmes, designed to help the students to return to full-time education.
- All students have a statement of special educational needs or an education health and care plan and are referred due to their social, emotional and mental health difficulties and associated challenging behaviour. Over a third of students have additional difficulties which include attention deficit and hyperactivity disorder (ADHD), oppositional defiant disorder (ODD), attachment disorder, and autistic spectrum disorder (ASD) and speech, language and communication difficulties.
- The school receives additional funding from the government, known as the pupil premium, to support the education of disadvantaged students. This is for students known to be eligible for free school meals or those who are looked after by the local authority. Around three quarters of the students are supported in this way; this is a much greater proportion than is typical nationally.
- All students are boys and the vast majority are of White British heritage. Many travel some distance across the county to attend school. The school also works with a small number of Key Stage 4 girls, who are not on the roll of the school, to support their individual learning programmes.
- Many students join the school during their secondary education and often at other times than the beginning of the academic year.
- The headteacher and deputy headteacher were absent from school at the time of the inspection. The local authority commissioned a consultant executive headteacher to lead the school until the end of the summer term.
- The Chair of the Governing Body took up her appointment in the spring term and a restructuring of the governing body then took place, following an audit of governor skills.
- The school works with Coventry and South Warwickshire Careers Guidance to support placements for students when they leave the school.

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

- Improve leadership and management at all levels by ensuring that:
  - subject leaders draw up more detailed and effective plans as to how they will make sure all year groups make good progress in their subjects
  - leaders, including governors, check more carefully on students' progress and hold teachers to account for this
  - leaders present information for governors more clearly so they can easily see which groups of students are making slower progress
  - the curriculum is reviewed, especially in Key Stage 3, so that it is better placed to provide for and meet the special educational needs and interests of the students and prepare them for their next steps in education, training and life
  - decisions about pay awards for teachers are directly related to the quality of teaching and to students' progress.

- Improve students' behaviour and attendance by ensuring:
  - all staff understand and consistently follow the agreed policies and practices to improve students' attitudes to learning and their concentration
  - leaders keep a closer eye on students' absence and devise effective ways of improving this so that the overall attendance rate improves rapidly
  - all staff use the agreed rewards systems consistently to help students understand what good behaviour looks like
  - where students are following part-time timetables, there are clear and time-limited plans in place for their swift return to full-time education.
  
- Improve the quality of teaching and the impact on students' achievement by ensuring that:
  - activities and work provided challenge the most-able students to achieve as much as possible
  - more students make better than expected progress
  - staff provide more opportunities for students to apply their skills effectively in literacy and mathematics
  - students take, and achieve, the level of qualification they are capable of, including more qualifications that employers will value
  - individual student's targets are used more effectively by staff and students to help them to make faster progress and to develop their key skills
  - students are clear about how they can improve their work and reach higher levels of skill.

An external review of governance, including a specific focus on the school's use of the pupil premium, should be undertaken in order to assess how these aspects of leadership and governance may be improved.

## Inspection judgements

### The leadership and management are inadequate

- Senior leaders and governors do not have an accurate view of the school's overall effectiveness, including the progress that students make. Judgements about the quality of teaching do not link to the progress students make over time.
- Leaders do not have robust systems for analysing information about students' behaviour, attendance or achievement. This has left them unable to identify clearly, where improvements need to be made and to implement any improvements effectively. Recent leadership changes mean the school is now much more aware of its shortcomings, but plans to address these are too recent to have had a significant impact.
- Subject leaders are not trained sufficiently in how to check on the quality of teaching and its impact. Consequently, they are not holding teachers to account for students' progress. Most teachers are unclear about how to assess students' work accurately or plan for students' next steps in learning. This was evident in a range of work and across different subjects. Teachers and subject leaders are keen to be effective, but have not been given enough guidance.
- Leaders have not made sure that all students have an equal opportunity to succeed. The most-able students are not challenged enough in lessons and students in Key Stage 4 do not have their learning moved forward quickly enough in many cases. Too many have only limited time for learning because the school only requires them to attend part-time. All of this means that although students can take a range of accredited courses including GCSEs, they do not achieve the higher levels that some are capable of, or the qualifications that employers will value. They are therefore not prepared well for their next steps in education or training.
- Serious behaviour incidents and those involving restraint are recorded in a bound book. However, leaders have not ensured effective monitoring of the causes of such incidents, including how well incidents are managed and how effective the response or support to students is. This limits the impact on student's behaviour and does not allow teachers or students to learn from such incidents over time.
- Senior leaders have not succeeded in creating a calm and purposeful working ethos within the school. They have not ensured that all staff consistently use the whole-school behaviour policy. Students' behaviour is often difficult for staff to manage, because there are not clear boundaries, rewards and consequences in place.
- The management of staff performance has been weak; for example, teachers have historically been awarded pay rises, which do not always relate to the quality of their performance and how well the students they teach are doing.
- The curriculum does not provide equality of opportunity because it does not take account of students' individual needs, especially in Key Stage 3. For example, it does not engage or interest those students with autistic spectrum disorder who require visual support and practical resources. The curriculum is not planned to allow students to make progress from one term to the next. Too many younger students have a poor attitude to learning as a result. Older students told inspectors, 'We did this in Year 5 in primary school'. While there is a range of interesting subjects on offer in Key Stage 4, these are not always presented at a high enough level to build on students' prior learning, or to give them qualifications and awards at a level that reflects their capabilities.
- The impact of the pupil premium and Year 7 catch-up funding is not evaluated well enough for the school to know whether the funding has been allocated effectively.
- Leaders have included in the citizenship curriculum the teaching of respect for each other's needs and differences, in preparation for life in modern Britain. A Key Stage 4 pupil represents the school on the special schools' parliament. The school council's work helps to support good relations and tackle discrimination but as yet this is not linked fully to the class work students do in their citizenship lessons.

- Students have access to appropriate careers guidance as required. Coventry and South Warwickshire Careers Guidance support leaders in helping students make informed choices about their next steps when they leave school. As a result, most go on to college places after the end of Year 11.
- Students on the Warwick and Coventry sites remain on part-time programmes for much too long. Leaders have not yet developed systems to ensure they make progress at a rate which links to their academic ability. Their restricted attendance holds them back further.
- The school should not appoint newly qualified teachers.
- The local authority is aware of the difficulties the school faces and has provided good support to leaders since the last inspection. Despite this, there were significant actions for the school to address as a result of the Ofsted monitoring visit in March 2015. They appointed the consultant executive headteacher to support the headteacher for two days per week in March 2015.
- The interim consultant executive headteacher is now leading the school in the absence of the headteacher and deputy headteacher. He has already made a significant impact in a short amount of time, having ensured all actions from the Ofsted monitoring visit have been completed, especially those concerning the safeguarding of students, so that arrangements now meet requirements. He has a clear view of what needs to be done and is determined that improvement will take place at an appropriately urgent pace. Staff spoken with and who responded to the questionnaire also reflected this determination.

#### ■ The governance of the school:

- Governors have not fostered a school community that is cohesive and shares a common vision of improvement for its students. Despite restructuring they are not yet effective in driving improvements or in holding staff and leaders to account for students' achievement. In particular, they are not sufficiently aware of the impact of teaching on learning and progress in different subjects and year groups.
- Governors have not kept a close enough oversight on spending. They have not ensured that the school provides value for money, including the use of its pupil premium funding. They rely too much on information about students' progress provided by school leaders. As a result, their understanding of the work of the school is not accurate enough. They do not know the school's strengths and weaknesses. They acknowledge that they have not kept themselves fully informed about students' progress, behaviour and attendance.
- Governors do not have an up-to-date picture of the quality of teaching in the school and its impact on students' progress. They have not checked sufficiently on teachers' performance and suitability for pay progression. They have awarded pay rises that have not been deserved. As a result, governors have not tackled underperformance effectively.
- The newly restructured governing body is determined to improve the quality of education provided by the school. Governors are working with the interim consultant executive headteacher and local authority representative to review and set priorities for improvement. They have taken the recommendations of the recent Ofsted monitoring visit very seriously and ensured that safeguarding now meets requirements fully.

### The behaviour and safety of students

are inadequate

#### Behaviour

- The behaviour of students is inadequate. Too much low-level disruption in lessons and around the school sites, in the corridors and outdoor areas has a negative impact on students' learning.
- Actions of teachers and teaching assistants to improve behaviour are not consistent across classes and subjects. Staff do not manage students' behaviour effectively as they rely too heavily on simply maintaining control rather than giving consistent messages about what good behaviour looks like and what will not be tolerated.
- There are limited opportunities for students, particularly the most able and those working on independent

learning programmes on the Warwick and Coventry sites, to take on additional responsibilities and develop their personal and social skills.

- Inspectors observed that where staff used praise and reward, students responded very positively and their attitudes towards school and their learning improved. There was, however, no consistent practice in place across the school to support students' understanding of what is expected and for using praise to secure good behaviour.
- The school does not accurately analyse incidents of inappropriate behaviour to help it to consider what works and what does not in helping students to improve their behaviour or staff to manage it. Although incidents involving restraint are recorded in a bound book, there is no monitoring or evaluation to help inform staff about next steps to improve students' behaviour.
- Inspectors observed some students, on all sites, responding well to clear routines in lessons. When teachers and support staff had high expectations of behaviour, students showed through their actions that they understood what was required of them and were attentive and listened well. In a mathematics lesson, at the Warwick site, students followed the teacher's instructions well, because the 'rules' as to what their teachers expected were clear.

### **Safety**

- The school's work to keep students safe and secure requires improvement.
- The interim consultant executive headteacher has swiftly ensured that the serious concerns raised at the last Ofsted monitoring visit have all been addressed. Before his arrival not all aspects of safeguarding were routinely checked and monitored. This is now all in place.
- Incidents of bullying are not recorded thoroughly or analysed well. When students spoke to inspectors about bullying they did not show an understanding that calling each other names and frequently using inappropriate and hurtful language, was a form of bullying. Staff are, however, working hard to teach students such behaviour is not acceptable at any time. The interim consultant executive headteacher has, rightly, prioritised ensuring a culture of respect for each other is promoted within the whole school. This was especially noticeable in a food technology lesson as students worked together, spoke politely and co-operated well in their food preparation and cooking.
- Improved supervision at break and lunchtime means that this ethos is further promoted. Students mostly play sensibly or chat together. Staff support by joining in some activities, for example table tennis. This all helps to build relationships between staff and students.
- Attendance has remained very low and well below the national average, since the last inspection. The interim consultant executive headteacher has taken action to improve attendance, but this is very recent and so it is too soon to see the impact.
- The rate of fixed-term exclusion has remained high since the last inspection. The interim consultant executive headteacher has recently introduced arrangements to deal with the consequences of poor behaviour. These measures are intended to support positive behaviour and safety, on all sites. It is, again, too early for the impact of this to be seen, although staff are clear as to how such sanctions should be used.
- The safeguarding policy and all actions to improve behaviour are also being applied on the Warwick and Coventry sites. These ensure that students are also kept safe there. Weekly meetings between staff and school leaders are in place to respond to any further steps that need to be taken.

### **The quality of teaching**

**is inadequate**

- Teachers are hampered in their work by the lack of a coherent curriculum in Key Stage 3. Not all teachers are clear about what students already know and can do and so targets set for students do not take account of this effectively. Work is often too easy or does not interest students. Consequently, students

often become bored and lose interest.

- In Key Stage 4, teachers plan work according to the qualifications and courses students are working towards, for example functional skills, entry level or GCSE. Teachers' expectations are not always sufficiently high and teaching lacks challenge. Students are presented with tasks that are too easy and not matched to their level of ability. Staff tend to focus on simply ensuring students complete the work, rather than on the progress students are making. As a result, students are not moved quickly enough onto the higher level work and qualifications that they could do. This limits their progress and achievement.
- Students too are unclear as to what is expected of them and so their own expectations are not high enough. Targets are not routinely shared with them and those set by staff are not challenging enough to stretch many students. Work seen in students' books confirms that many make little progress and are not fulfilling their potential. This applies to all sites and to students whatever their additional needs or starting points, including those supported by the pupil premium.
- Resources, such as worksheets, are sometimes too easy or too hard for students' level of development; for example, they do not take account of students' reading levels, or current level of understanding of the concepts being taught.
- Teaching assistants are not always clear about what is expected of them and how they should support students to learn. Sometimes teaching assistants are asked to help students with tasks that make little sense, such as copying sentences from a worksheet without explanation. Conversely, where lessons are well planned and suitable for the students, teaching assistants are very effective in engaging and supporting students and they learn well as a result.
- Some classrooms are untidy, not well organised, and do little to support students' learning. Others are bright and neat with good learning prompts. The corridor displays celebrate students' achievements.
- In some lessons, there is a good match of task to students' different needs and a high level of challenge. For example, in a Year 11 mathematics lesson students were revising for their GCSE examination confidently, budgeting by dividing up ratios to calculate sections on a pie chart. Students could assess their own learning and explain what they needed to do next in order to improve.
- The teaching of a range of outdoor learning such as canoeing and cycling, engages students' interests well. As a result, they are motivated to try hard and they improve their skills well.
- The quality of teaching in reading, literacy and mathematics overall is inadequate because work teachers set takes insufficient account of students' specific needs including their special educational needs. As a result, students do not progress as quickly as they should. The school does not have a consistent approach to teaching students who have poor or underdeveloped skills in reading or writing. Some teachers and support staff do not know what to do to improve these important skills rapidly. In addition, students have limited opportunities to apply these skills in other subjects.
- Some staff have had limited training as to how to meet the differing needs of students with attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) or autistic spectrum disorder (ASD). As a result, students' key skills are poor and some staff do not manage these students' learning and behavioural needs effectively.

### The achievement of pupils

is inadequate

- There is widespread underachievement across the school. Students are not set challenging targets for what they should be able to achieve in English and mathematics, and other subjects. Work is not matched well enough to their ability and needs.
- Students often enter the school with significant gaps in their learning. These gaps in learning are not being adequately addressed because assessment and monitoring are not being used effectively. The information gained from assessment, for example, does not inform and prioritise the next steps in learning



or the level of work that students are set. This limits the progress students make, such as in improving their reading or in achieving higher grades.

- The school has begun to collect and analyse data from 2014 and for this academic year. The data presented for English and mathematics during the inspection show that senior leaders do not have high enough expectations of their students. They have not made comparisons to the rate of progress expected nationally and have not expected students to make rapid progress after settling into the school. They have seen the students' behaviour difficulties to be a continued barrier to their progress, rather than ensuring that the students receive effective support to overcome their difficulties.
- As on the main school site, students on the Warwick and Coventry sites are assessed when they enter the school. While they complete tasks set by their teachers, expectations are too low. As a result, they do not progress quickly enough to entry level and GCSE courses. Too few students achieve recognised accreditation when they leave.
- The assessment information that leaders presented during the inspection shows that too few students make expected progress from their starting points on entry. Few make enough progress between the end of Key Stage 3 and the end of Key Stage 4 in English and mathematics. The work seen in books during the inspection confirms that students do not make sufficient progress from their starting points in English, mathematics and in other subjects.
- Key Stage 4 students are often entered for qualifications in English and mathematics at too low a level for their abilities so they are not able to achieve what they could. Too few qualifications achieved were at a level employers would value such as GCSE.
- Disadvantaged students, who are supported by the pupil premium, make inadequate progress. In 2014, at the end of Key Stage 4, there was a gap in the results of disadvantaged students and others in the school in English and mathematics, equivalent to two GCSE grades. This is because the additional support they receive is not effective in addressing the difficulties these students face in their learning.
- The most able students are not given sufficient challenge. They do not reach the higher levels in their examinations when in Year 11. For example, only a very small minority achieve a GCSE grade G to C.
- Almost all students in Year 11 went on to college, training or employment at the end of the last academic year. However, their underachievement at the school did not ensure that they were well prepared for the next steps in life and education.

## 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 students' needs. This ensures that students 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 students' needs. Students 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 students 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>	125795
<b>Local authority</b>	Warwickshire
<b>Inspection number</b>	463817

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>	11–16
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Boys
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	59
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Gina Attwood
<b>Headteacher</b>	Mike Turner
<b>Interim Consultant Executive Headteacher</b>	Tony Dickens
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	21 November 2013
<b>Telephone number</b>	01564 792514
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