

Windlehurst School

Windlehurst Road, Hawk Green, Stockport, SK6 7HZ

Inspection dates 14–15 July 2015

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Requires improvement	3
	This inspection:	Good	2
Leadership and management		Good	2
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Good	2
Quality of teaching		Good	2
Achievement of pupils		Good	2

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school.

- The school has worked hard to raise standards. It is now a good school and it is improving rapidly. Leaders are focused on constant improvement.
- Most students re-engage with learning, make good progress and achieve well. All gain external accreditation.
- Staff are very committed to students' success. Teaching is good and helps students to achieve as well as possible.
- Behaviour improves dramatically after students have spent time at the school, so students are able to learn and become much more positive in their attitudes to learning.
- Parents and students believe that school is safe and a place where learning can be enjoyed.
- Good spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is seen throughout the school. Students gain in confidence and develop skills such as sharing, collaborating and listening to the opinions of others.
- Staff are encouraged to develop their professional skills and knowledge. This approach underpins the improvement that has seen standards rise so much.
- Governors focus on school improvement. They hold the leadership of the school to account well. This has been a crucial element in the school's rapid improvement.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Improvement is not as rapid in Key Stage 4, where students do not always get the same high level of pastoral care and support as in Key Stage 3.
- The attendance of a small minority of students remains very low.
- Leaders have not developed a clear plan for ensuring effective leadership is sustained should any of them leave.

Information about this inspection

- Six lessons were observed, all jointly with the headteacher.
- Meetings were held with the headteacher, other senior leaders and leaders of key subject areas. The inspector met with members of the governing body and a representative of the local authority.
- Parents' views were gathered from the recently conducted survey undertaken by the school (based on the Ofsted Parent View survey) and completed by 13 parents, and from meeting with a group of parents. There were no separate responses to the Ofsted survey.
- The views of students were gathered from talking to groups from both key stages and from talking to individuals during lesson observations and in breaks. A detailed scrutiny of samples of students' work was made and the work in their current books was looked at during lesson observations. Case studies were conducted to glean information about the wider support given to students and its impact on learning.
- Staff views were gathered from discussions throughout the inspection and from the 24 responses to the recent school survey of the views of staff.
- Reports on the progress of school from the local authority and by an external consultant were taken into account.
- A range of written information was looked at, including information on the progress of students. Teachers' planning and assessment was scrutinised, together with the school's analysis of its own performance and how it could improve. A range of policies, including those for safeguarding, were studied.

Inspection team

Martyn Groucutt, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- Windlehurst is a special school for students with social, emotional and mental health difficulties. All have additional complex needs that include autistic spectrum disorder, attention deficit hyperactivity disorders and communication difficulties.
- All students have a statement of special educational needs or an education, health and care plan.
- The proportion of disadvantaged students who qualify for support through the pupil premium is far higher than that usually found. This is additional government funding to support students known to be eligible for free school meals, or those children who are looked after by the local authority.
- Almost all students are from White British backgrounds.
- The school uses a range of alternative providers to support vocational and practical learning opportunities for students in Key Stage 4, depending on individual needs. Stockport College is used regularly. At the time of the inspection, placements were also made at Works4U, the Millhouse Project and Mixed Martial Arts. Placements are always supervised by Windlehurst staff.
- The school sometimes enters students for examinations earlier than the usual point for taking them.
- The school is based on two sites which are about six miles apart. In addition, the school also has a base in Stockport College from which it is able to focus on providing vocationally based learning.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Ensure that the rate of improvement in Key Stage 4 matches that currently seen in Key Stage 3 by:
 - strengthening ways in which students are supported, including supporting their social and emotional needs when they move to a pattern of being taught by different teachers for different subjects
 - ensure that when a school place is being sought for a student already in Key Stage 4, Windlehurst is chosen only when it meets the student's identified specific needs.
- Further raise the attendance of the small number of students who are reluctant to attend school.
- Strengthen leadership and management even further by:
 - ensuring that systems are not over-reliant on any one member of staff so that should any leader leave, the quality of overall leadership and management can be maintained
 - supporting the professional development of members of the senior leadership team through opportunities to develop their own expertise.

Inspection judgements

The leadership and management are good

- The headteacher and senior leaders have focused on raising standards and improving behaviour and so the school has improved from a school requiring improvement at the last inspection to a good school now. Leaders are focused on constant improvement in order to sustain this progress into the future.
- Staff are fully committed to improvement, which is reflected in the determination of those with additional responsibility, leaders of key subject areas, and middle leaders. As a result of their work there is clear improvement in the teaching of reading, writing and mathematics.
- Teaching is good, supported by strong leadership. Detailed monitoring supports a very effective process of staff appraisal and professional development. Challenging annual objectives set for staff help the school meet its own priorities and develop the individual expertise of staff.
- Senior leaders' understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses is detailed and accurate. It helps the school to develop priorities for moving forward and there is a constant focus on improvement.
- The range of subjects and topics taught enables all students to learn effectively. Planning focuses on individual needs so every pupil is able to learn and is challenged to do his or her best. In Key Stage 3 teaching and learning is based on a primary school model and students work with the same teacher and learning support assistants throughout the year. This creates a nurturing approach that provides effective support not only for learning but also for emotional and social development.
- At Key Stage 4 students are taught by teachers who are subject specialists. This means that the same intense levels of support provided for younger students is not replicated and currently the rate of improvement is not so strong in this part of the school. Sometimes students who require a place in a Year 10 or Year 11 class are placed at this school without a detailed analysis of their wider needs or of the ability of the school to meet them. When this happens the school cannot always fully meet an individual's needs and on occasions such action has unsettled existing students, stopping them from learning as effectively.
- Nevertheless there is good support to help students move on at the end of Year 11. Careers advice is effective. This year all students have a clear plan in place for moving to college, employment or training. Last year too, 100% of students gained some form of accreditation.
- The students are being enabled to play a full part in modern Britain and to understand the nature of the society in which they live. Good work is done to reinforce the importance of participation in the democratic process, such as work focusing on the recent general election.
- Some students benefit from much of their learning being undertaken with alternative providers. A small group of students who are not able to engage with academic learning are supported effectively through a range of opportunities to gain practical and life skills. Placements are chosen carefully and monitored with care to ensure that students are safe and that their learning and other needs are being met to prepare them well for adulthood.
- The school focuses on meeting the needs of every student and ensures they are free from discrimination. This reflects the school's strong commitment to ensuring all have an equal opportunity. Good relations are fostered by helping students to develop positive attitudes towards themselves and to others.
- Pupil premium funding has been used imaginatively. It has enabled the school to speed up the progress of those students who are entitled to it.
- Arrangements for safeguarding are effective and robust and meet all legal requirements. Care is taken to ensure that the recruitment of staff is particularly rigorous so as to ensure that these vulnerable students are not put at risk.
- The school is committed to working with a range of other professionals, many of whom provide a range of services to the families of students. There is also a firm commitment to working with parents and carers, resulting in strong parental support for the school. School staff persevere in trying to work with the small number of families whose children have too many unexplained absences.
- There are positive links with the local authority which has given effective support to the school in its journey from requiring improvement to being good. This has included the provision of extremely beneficial outside consultancy which has supported leadership well in raising standards.
- Senior leaders acknowledge the need to plan for the future. However, there have been too few leadership development opportunities for team members to refine and develop their skills. There has been too little thought given to developing a plan to sustain the effective operation of the team should any of its members leave the school and leave a gap in their specific area of responsibility.

■ The governance of the school:

- There is a range of expertise on the governing body that enables it to do its job effectively and carry out all its legal duties, including those for safeguarding. Governors challenge senior leaders to ensure effective provision and equality of opportunity. They have a detailed grasp of the information on the progress made by students and visit the school to see the quality of teaching for themselves and what goes on in class. They also talk to students so they have a good understanding of what they think about the school. Financial monitoring is effective and includes an understanding of how the pupil premium funding is spent, as well as the impact it has. Governors understand the appraisal system and the direct link between teachers' performance and any pay awards. They know what is done to reward good teaching and the process for tackling any that is inadequate. Challenging annual performance objectives are set for the headteacher, which are monitored carefully.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

Behaviour

- The behaviour of students is good. When students first arrive they exhibit very challenging behaviour. Each new student is given an individual behaviour plan with clear targets, monitored on a half-termly basis. There is clear evidence that from the start students are given strong support that quickly enables them to adopt far more positive patterns of behaviour.
- Improvement is rapid and this supports students' re-engagement with learning and enables them to make good progress in their learning in the large majority of cases. Good behaviour is sustained throughout the day. Lunchtimes and breaks give opportunities for staff and students to share time together in a relaxed and friendly way.
- However, there is a small group of Year 11 students who have never successfully re-engaged in learning and the school has sought to meet their needs by developing a vocationally-based programme with good support from alternative providers. Vocational provision has enabled this group to demonstrate a greater willingness to participate and to attend regularly, with consequent improvement in their behaviour. Improved attitudes are helping students to develop a range of life and work skills, so they gain positive benefits from their courses and are in a better position to gain employment in the future.
- Staff are good role models and have high expectations of behaviour. Students develop positive relationships with staff and behaviour improves consistently throughout the school. The more nurturing nature of the support in Key Stage 3 is particularly effective in achieving this.
- Parents who spoke to the inspector were full of praise for the work done by the school in changing the negative attitudes and behaviours of their children. Students become much more self-confident, while at the same time gaining an appreciation of the needs of others. Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good and is reflected in the increasing willingness of students over time to share, collaborate and respect other people's rights and opinions.

Safety

- The school's work to keep students safe and secure is good. Since the last inspection there has been a marked reduction in the use of restraint and in the number of exclusions. The very occasional use of derogatory or discriminatory language is dealt with firmly and students are helped to understand why it is a negative act. There is an expectation that the student would not repeat such words. This is a reflection of the wider improvements in teaching and learning seen over this period.
- Effective supervision means that students have little opportunity to bully but when there has been any kind of incident students say that staff deal with it quickly and effectively. Anti-bullying week is marked in school and lessons develop a good understanding of bullying in its different forms, such as that based on prejudice. This includes cyber-bullying and the risks from misusing the internet and social networking sites.
- Detailed risk assessments are in place for the school and for venues for visits. They are also carried out for each individual student in order to keep them as safe as possible when they undertake any activities. This process includes seeking to ensure the safety of students at alternative placements, which are monitored in detail.
- A large majority of students show improvement in their attendance. Sometimes improvement in attendance is dramatic. This is very well supported by the work undertaken by the family engagement team. They work extremely hard with the small number of families who continue to refuse to send their children to school on a regular basis. The school works with a range of agencies, including the local authority, but this remains an issue to address, albeit to a much reduced extent than at the time of the

last inspection.

The quality of teaching

is good

- Strong relationships between teachers and their classroom support assistants create effective teams that promote good learning across the school. They are able to pitch work at just the right level because planning is detailed and takes the needs of every student into account.
- This supports the strong progress made by most students. They say that they enjoy their learning, sometimes for the first time in their education. Successful teaching develops competence in reading, writing and mathematics and this underpins good learning in other subjects. Opportunities are sought to bring elements of literacy and mathematics into teaching across all subject areas. This means that students learn to apply the skills and put them to practical use.
- Teachers have high expectations and this often leads to students developing higher expectations of themselves. All staff show good understanding of the wider needs and learning difficulties faced by the students and they work hard to help them to overcome their difficulties. Teachers ensure that, through individualised teaching, every student is challenged fully and therefore able to make the best possible progress.
- Lessons are often fun and engage students well so they remain focused and on-task. Students' enjoyment of lessons supports the progress they make and helps them to realise the importance of learning. Teachers upload the latest information on individual's progress on a half-termly basis to the school's database. This allows leaders to undertake detailed whole school analysis of progress. They work with teachers to ensure additional help is provided to support those not making the progress expected of them, while those making increasingly rapid progress remain properly challenged through setting more difficult targets.
- Teachers make good use of questioning, not only to check understanding but also to encourage students to think and to express their thoughts and opinions. As a result, students become more confident as learners.
- Work is marked regularly and there is a good level of consistency in using the school's marking policy. Teachers offer advice to students about how work might be improved and how progress is being made towards meeting learning targets. This feedback from teachers helps students to improve the quality of their work, which is reflected in the good progress they make over time.

The achievement of pupils

is good

- Achievement has shown a dramatic improvement since the last inspection. Students enter with generally low attainment as a result of earlier failure within the education system. Once they are at Windlehurst care is taken to assess their starting points in reading, writing and mathematics and learning targets are set. Half-termly monitoring shows that virtually all students make the progress expected of them and a good proportion do better than expected in English and mathematics. Teachers are successful in encouraging students to read every day.
- Progress is better among the younger pupils where it is often rapid as they re-engage with learning promptly. However, this good level of progress is not sustained throughout each and every year group. Slower progress is most noticeable among the older students who have been longest at the school and did not always get the current high levels of support right from the start. Younger students are particularly well supported through the nurturing approach to learning using the primary school model. Progress among the older students, who are taught by subject specialists, is not so rapid because they do not receive this positive level of direct help and support at a pastoral level. However, all make progress, sometimes helped by the school's willingness to try alternatives to traditional methods of teaching and learning. By the time students leave it is an expectation that every student will have gained some form of accreditation. Last year two-thirds gained at least five passes in some form of recognised qualification.
- The nature of the students' learning difficulties does not preclude most of them from making progress in their learning. The most able students are given the greatest challenge and some are able to achieve the higher grades at GCSE. This represents outstanding progress when initial starting points are taken into consideration. Teachers enter students for a range of qualifications to suit individual needs, including in key skills, sport and vocational subjects. Some are entered for examinations early, which does not have a detrimental effect but gives students greater confidence to aim for further qualifications.
- Disadvantaged students, who constitute the large majority, benefit from the effective use of the pupil

premium funding. For example, it was used to establish the family engagement team and this was so successful that its costs were taken into the whole school budget so it could be extended and sustained into the future. Now the pupil premium is being used mainly to provide extra staffing to support students to catch up when progress is not rapid enough. Extra support is helping disadvantaged students to make faster progress. When their progress as a group is compared to that of students nationally they are now making better progress than that usually found. The very small numbers in each year group means that the picture varies year on year. The more able students make progress so rapidly that they can overtake the progress of non-disadvantaged students nationally, while others with more severe learning difficulties are not closing the gap in their attainment to any significant extent.

- The school uses its detailed progress data to check for any differences in the progress made between identified groups of students, including the group who use alternative provision. The majority of students make the best progress of which they are capable in English and mathematics and in wider learning and life skills. As a result all students are well prepared for the next stage in their lives and there are no differences in the achievement of identified groups of students.

What inspection judgements mean

School	Grade	Judgement	Description
	Grade 1	Outstanding	An outstanding school is highly effective in delivering outcomes that provide exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs. This ensures that pupils are very well equipped for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
	Grade 2	Good	A good school is effective in delivering outcomes that provide well for all its pupils' needs. Pupils are well prepared for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
	Grade 3	Requires improvement	A school that requires improvement is not yet a good school, but it is not inadequate. This school will receive a full inspection within 24 months from the date of this inspection.
	Grade 4	Inadequate	<p>A school that has serious weaknesses is inadequate overall and requires significant improvement but leadership and management are judged to be Grade 3 or better. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p> <p>A school that requires special measures is one where the school is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the school's leaders, managers or governors have not demonstrated that they have the capacity to secure the necessary improvement in the school. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p>

School details

Unique reference number	131889
Local authority	Stockport
Inspection number	462305

This inspection of the school was carried out under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

Type of school	Special
School category	Community special
Age range of pupils	11–16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	39
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Margaret Burns
Headteacher	Lesley Abercromby
Date of previous school inspection	12 June 2013
Telephone number	0161 427 4788
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