

John Watson School

Littleworth Road, Wheatley, Oxford OX33 1NN

Inspection dates	24–25 May 2016
Overall effectiveness	Good
Effectiveness of leadership and management	Good
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Good
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Good
Outcomes for pupils	Good
Early years provision	Good
16 to 19 study programmes	Good
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Requires improvement

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school

- The headteacher has high expectations of everyone. Staff and governors share his ambition for each pupil. Important improvements to teaching and learning have taken place.
- Teachers use assessment information to plan lessons that challenge and support pupils' differing needs well. Consequently, pupils across the school make good progress from their starting points in reading, writing and mathematics.
- The pupil premium is spent effectively. Disadvantaged pupils achieve as well as their classmates because they receive helpful additional support.
- Children achieve well in the early years. Staff form strong relationships with them and use their knowledge of individuals to ensure that they make good progress across the areas of learning.
- Pupils behave well. Staff support pupils to make the right choices and set clear expectations for behaviour.
- Personal development and equality is at the heart of the school's work. Pupils develop positive attitudes to learning and develop confidence because there are many opportunities to do so.
- The curriculum is carefully organised to meet pupils' wide-ranging abilities. Leaders keep a close eye on pupils' achievements to ensure that their work is sufficiently challenging.
- Governors are effective. They provide appropriate challenge and support to senior leaders and check that responsibilities are met.
- Learners in the sixth form are well prepared for the next stage in education or employment. Appropriate provision ensures that they have essential skills and attain suitable qualifications.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Not all leaders use pupils' progress information to plan improvements and measure their success.
- Some parents are not positive about the work of the school.
- Opportunities to develop pupils' skills and knowledge are not always maximised.
- Teaching does not consistently promote communication or ensure that pupils are working towards their individual therapy targets.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Strengthen the leadership, management and governance of the school by ensuring that:
 - all leaders use pupils' progress information to plan improvements and measure the impact of their work across all subjects
 - parents understand the work of the school and the progress that their children are making.

- Further improve outcomes across the school by ensuring that:
 - all staff make the best use of communication strategies and pupils' individual therapy targets to provide highly effective challenge and support to all pupils
 - pupils have sufficient opportunities to practise their learning in a range of contexts, including at home.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management is good

- The headteacher and deputy headteachers have high expectations of everyone. Together, they have made important changes to the school that have raised pupils' achievement. Staff share senior leaders' motivations and are striving to provide high-quality care and education for each individual pupil.
- Senior leaders have an accurate understanding of the school's effectiveness. They have used this to devise ambitious improvement plans that are well focused on making the right changes. For example, the headteacher sought to increase the governing body's oversight of safeguarding. As a result, a designated safeguarding governor meets regularly with the deputy headteacher and ensures that safeguarding is effective.
- Middle leaders provide enthusiastic support for senior leaders' initiatives. They carry out regular checks on the quality of teaching and learning and provide effective support to teachers. However, middle leaders do not yet use pupils' progress information well enough to plan improvements or measure the impact of their work. There has been a stronger emphasis on securing good outcomes in English and mathematics than other subjects.
- Effective systems are in place to support improvements to the quality of teaching and learning. Teachers receive helpful feedback and training. Performance reviews ensure that teachers are appropriately held to account and their practice is further developed.
- The pupil premium is spent well. Disadvantaged pupils benefit from additional teaching that supports their learning in reading, writing and mathematics. Leaders also ensure that these pupils have equal opportunities to participate in extra-curricular activities. Consequently, disadvantaged pupils across the school make good progress.
- The curriculum is carefully organised into three different pathways so that pupils of all abilities have equal access to appropriate learning across a broad range of topics. Leaders ensure that teachers use assessment information to match learning well to pupils' different needs. For example, the most able pupils have opportunities to deepen their understanding of the different subjects. As a result, different groups of pupils, including the most able, are making good progress from their starting points.
- The curriculum is interesting and facilitates personal development. For example, secondary aged pupils are highly motivated by the 'Venison house project'. Teachers, some parents and pupils from the mainstream school are supporting pupils to lead the development of an area of the school site into a garden business. Pupils have already created a grass sofa, written blogs and spoken to local businesses. Opportunities such as these have enabled pupils to develop their confidence and skills across a range of subjects.
- Extra-curricular activities further strengthen the curriculum. Clubs such as arts, sports, film and drama help to advance pupils' skills, knowledge, understanding and personal development.
- Social, moral, spiritual and cultural understanding and British values are well promoted. For example, pupils' spiritual development is supported through reflection times such as yoga and stretching. In assemblies and religious education, pupils learn about other cultures and mutual respect through celebrations of festivals such as Diwali. Carefully planned sex and relationships lessons help pupils to learn about morals and promote tolerance. Consequently, pupils are well prepared for life in modern Britain.
- Equal opportunities are at the heart of the school's work. Leaders ensure that pupils know about discrimination and the impact it can have on others. One older learner said, 'If you are different and have disabilities you could be treated badly by some people. This isn't right.'
- The additional sports funding for primary pupils is spent effectively. Pupils benefit from sports coaching, swimming and horse riding. As a result, pupils are participating in a wider range of sports and making good progress in physical development.
- The local authority has provided valuable support to the headteacher since he started in September 2013. In the past year, the local authority has carried out a review of the school's effectiveness and helped the headteacher to develop effective improvement plans.
- Senior leaders have taken some steps to improve communication with parents. For example, parents receive regular newsletters that share some of the work pupils have completed. Nevertheless, some parents are not clear about the progress that their child is making, how their child is taught or what they are learning.

■ The governance of the school

- Governors are effective. They have taken steps to ensure that they provide appropriate challenge and support to senior leaders. For example, different governors are checking the progress of each area of the school development plan. Governors receive helpful reports from the headteacher that include pupils' progress information. Governors are increasingly using this to ask senior leaders questions to check the impact of their work.
- Governors have due regard for their statutory responsibilities. For example, they have ensured that the pupil premium is spent well and ensure that teachers' pay is linked to pupils' achievement. Governors have maintained a focus on securing improvements to teaching and learning.
- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective. The deputy headteacher responsible for safeguarding has implemented robust procedures that ensure everyone knows what to do if they are worried about a pupil. The school works very well to challenge other agencies to take action to support vulnerable pupils. Appropriate supervision is in place to promote pupils' welfare when on and off the school sites.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment is good

- Teaching enables pupils to make good progress across the curriculum.
- Teachers use assessment information well to help them decide the next steps for pupils' learning. For example, in a physical education lesson, the teacher provided key stage 2 pupils with a range of different challenges to develop their throwing skills. Pupils threw beanbags over nets and through hoops from positions that were appropriate for their physical abilities. Some pupils were able to throw successfully at targets. Consequently, pupils with different needs and abilities are making equally good progress.
- Teachers have high expectations of pupils. They ensure that pupils maintain concentration and succeed in learning. In one lesson, a teacher sang 'shake the jar' to enable a Year 2 pupil to focus on selecting the appropriate number of counters from a jar. As a result, the pupil was able to find the right number of counters to demonstrate her correct understanding of the number six.
- Teaching of phonics (letters and the sounds that they make) is effective. One teaching assistant showed good subject knowledge when she challenged a key stage 3 pupil to find the same sound spelled differently in a range of words. The teaching assistant pronounced the sound correctly and supported the pupil to sort the words into different spelling groups. Consequently, achievement in reading has risen.
- Mathematics achievement is a strength of the school. Pupils benefit from practical lessons that make links to real-life learning. In key stage 4, some pupils were finding the area and perimeter of compound shapes. Pupils were measuring their recent designs for a raised flower bed with access points for wheelchairs for the 'Venison house project'. Pupils were keen to calculate correctly and efficiently.
- In some lessons, teachers promote communication skills very well. Some teachers use sign language, symbols and technology to support pupils effectively. Some also carefully integrate pupils' individual therapy targets into lessons. When this is the case, pupils' achievement accelerates further. However, not all teachers consistently use the agreed communication strategies or provide enough opportunities for pupils to work towards their individual targets.
- Pupils have more opportunities to practise writing in a range of subjects. For example, sixth form learners were writing shopping lists and lists of jobs to complete as part of their life skills learning. However, teachers do not ensure all opportunities to develop pupils' skills and knowledge are exploited well enough in a range of places, including at home.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare is good

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good.
- Pupils are confident and friendly. They relish opportunities to welcome visitors. The school council were keen to share their favourite things about the school, such as helping each other, cooking and learning how to travel independently. Leaders prioritise pupils' personal development and the curriculum reflects this.
- Bullying is rare. Pupils know that bullying is 'horrible behaviour to another person'. They are confident that adults will help them if they have a problem. Although pupils say that they feel safe, a small minority of parents do not agree.

- There are many opportunities for pupils to learn how to keep safe. For example, pupils working on the 'Venison house project' used tape to cordon off areas before a digger arrived. Pupils can describe some ways to stay safe. For example, they can explain stranger danger and how to take care when crossing the road.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good.
- Staff help pupils to develop resilience and sustain concentration on tasks. The school's three habits of learning, 'engage, motivate and think', support this. Other activities such as daily 'wake up, shake up' sessions also help prepare pupils for learning. Consequently, pupils have positive attitudes to learning and try hard.
- Around the school, pupils behave well. For example, older pupils share their playgrounds amicably with pupils from Wheatley Park School and Wheatley Primary School. This is because there are clear expectations of their behaviour and most adults reinforce these consistently, rewarding 'good choices'.
- There have been almost no exclusions in the last three years. Adults support pupils with challenging behaviour well. More experienced teachers and leaders support some new staff to help pupils make the right choices at less structured times such as in the dining hall.
- Pupils' attendance is similar to the national average for all secondary schools and well above that for special schools. Leaders keep a close eye on pupils' attendance and work very well with families and other professionals to keep absence rates low.

Outcomes for pupils

are good

- Across the school, current pupils are making good progress in reading, writing, mathematics and science. This is because teaching meets pupils' needs well.
- Children in the early years make good progress from their individual starting points. They settle well into school and achieve well because staff support them closely.
- Last year, pupils in the primary and secondary school made good progress in English, mathematics and science. Teachers and leaders carried out regular checks on their learning and took action to ensure all pupils achieved well.
- Pupils make particularly strong progress in mathematics. There are opportunities across the curriculum for pupils to use and apply their mathematics skills and knowledge.
- Improvements in the teaching of phonics has led to increased rates of progress in reading. Pupils show that they can use phonics to work out unfamiliar words when reading.
- Pupils make good progress in writing. There are more opportunities for pupils to learn to write and practise writing than there were in the past.
- By the time they leave the school, pupils attain a range of appropriate and relevant qualifications. Last year, some pupils achieved GCSE grades in English, science, design technology and art. All leavers had gained external awards that were appropriate to their individual ability.
- Different groups of pupils, including the most able, make good progress from their starting points. The curriculum provides appropriate pathways that enable pupils to achieve well across the range of subjects.
- Disadvantaged pupils make similar progress to their classmates. Additional support is well targeted and enables them to be successful.
- Learners leave the sixth form well prepared for the next stage of education or employment. This is because teaching ensures that they have essential skills and appropriate qualifications.
- Pupils are making less consistent progress with their individual therapy targets. There have been a number of changes to visiting therapists. Furthermore, teaching does not always promote achievement in these areas well enough.

Early years provision

is good

- Children join the Nursery with skills and abilities that are considerably lower than those of others their age. They make good progress through the early years across the areas of learning. Children make more rapid progress in communication and language and personal, social and emotional development. This is because leaders have placed a stronger emphasis on improving provision in these areas.
- Teachers and teaching assistants form strong relationships with individual children and use their knowledge of what children can do to provide activities that match their skills and abilities. Consequently, children from a range of backgrounds and with different abilities are making good progress from their starting points.
- Leaders have provided staff with training to promote communication in all activities. As a result, adults use a range of methods to communicate with pupils such as copying, sign language and talking. For example, a teaching assistant encouraged one of the children to make a prediction by asking questions. He had made a ramp into the sandpit for a truck. When asked how far the truck would go by looking at the tracks, he was able to show understanding by pointing at the end of the ramp and saying, 'there'.
- Strong partnerships support children's learning well. Health visitors provide helpful information that enables staff to understand the needs, interests and abilities of children joining the early years. Nursery and Reception children participate in activities with children at Wheatley Nursery School. This enables them to learn with and play alongside a larger group of children their own age, further promoting their development.
- Staff know children very well and demonstrate a high level of care and vigilance. As a result, children are safe and behave well. Children are confident to play with others and use a range of equipment such as tricycles and climbing frames.

16 to 19 study programmes

are good

- Leaders have high expectations of what learners can achieve in the sixth form. Through the curriculum, learners can achieve a range of qualifications covering a breadth of subjects that are appropriate to their skills and abilities. Leaders ensure that learners are able to follow a personalised pathway, including English and mathematics, which meets their individual needs. The new sixth form leader is currently reviewing provision to ensure that it is appropriate for the next group of learners.
- Teaching is effective. As a result, all learners are making good progress from their starting points, including in English and mathematics. Teachers use their knowledge of each learner to provide effective challenge and support. However, teachers do not always exploit every opportunity to enable learners to practise their skills in a range of contexts. When this happens, their progress is reduced.
- Last year, all learners left the school to continue with education or employment. This is because the curriculum provides opportunities for learners to develop employment skills in the workplace. Current learners work in a local supermarket, a farm and a beauticians with the support of school staff. Through this, they learn the importance of good attendance and demonstrating appropriate behaviour.
- Leaders have ensured that learners receive appropriate, independent careers advice. This included a workshop that enabled them to learn about job applications and experience of interviews. Careers advice is effective.
- There are opportunities for learners to develop their understanding of safety. For example, learners enjoy a 'bikeability' programme and know the importance of using the road with care. Consequently, learners feel safe and can describe how they are kept safe.
- Learners are well prepared for the next stage in their life. Leaders seek to enable learners to be as independent as possible. Currently, learners are creating a 'social zone' in the sixth form block. They work together to plan and purchase household items such as duvet covers and take it in turns to complete 'housework' as part of their life skills learning. One learner was particularly proud of his bed making and seized the opportunity to test it out!

School details

Unique reference number	123333
Local authority	Oxfordshire
Inspection number	10002331

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

Type of school	Special
School category	Community special
Age range of pupils	2–19
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in 16 to 19 study programmes	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	81
Of which, number on roll in 16 to 19 study programmes	6
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Helen Nowicki
Headteacher	Stephen Passey
Telephone number	01865 452 725
Website	www.johnwatsonschool.org
Email address	office@johnwatsonschool.org
Date of previous inspection	5–6 November 2013

Information about this school

- John Watson School is a special school. It provides education for pupils who have a range of special educational needs or disability including severe learning difficulties, profound and multiple learning difficulties, moderate learning difficulties, speech, language and communication needs, and autistic spectrum disorders.
- All pupils have an education, health and care plan or statement of special educational needs.
- A small minority of pupils are eligible for the pupil premium, which is additional government funding for pupils in local authority care or eligible for free school meals.
- The proportion of pupils from minority ethnic groups is similar to the national average. A very small minority of pupils speak English as an additional language.
- The school is federated with Wheatley Nursery School. The headteacher, two of the three deputy headteachers and the governing body lead both schools.
- The school is on two sites. Children in the early years and primary aged pupils share a site with Wheatley Primary School and Wheatley Nursery School. Secondary aged pupils are housed in a building on the campus of Wheatley Park, the local secondary school. Some older learners access some GCSE lessons at Wheatley Park where appropriate.
- Children in the Nursery Year are dual registered with the Nursery school.
- The school uses work placements to support learners' wider development in the sixth form. No alternative provision is used.
- The headteacher works with other local schools to improve teaching and learning. This includes the headteacher of Frank Wise School, a national leader of education.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 18 lessons and parts of lessons, all but two of which were conducted jointly with senior leaders.
- Meetings were held with senior leaders, middle leaders, pupils, five members of the governing body and a representative of the local authority.
- Inspectors spoke to six parents on the playground and took into account 42 responses, including 19 comments, to the online questionnaire (Parent View). They also considered 47 responses to the staff questionnaire.
- A range of documents was looked at including the school's information about pupils' achievement and records concerning pupils' attendance, behaviour and safety.

Inspection team

Caroline Dulon, lead inspector

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Her Majesty's Inspector

Ofsted Inspector

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