

# St John's Wood Academy

Longridge, Knutsford, Cheshire WA16 8PA

## Inspection dates

6–7 March 2018

<b>Overall effectiveness</b>	<b>Inadequate</b>
Effectiveness of leadership and management	<b>Inadequate</b>
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	<b>Inadequate</b>
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	<b>Inadequate</b>
Outcomes for pupils	<b>Inadequate</b>
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Not previously inspected

## Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

### This is an inadequate school

- In 2016, the school reopened as part of The Adelaide Academy Trust. There has been a significant decline in all aspects of the school's performance since the predecessor school was inspected in 2013. The scale of challenge facing the school is monumental.
- Leaders at all levels, including governors, have failed to take the urgent and decisive action required to reverse the decline in the school's performance.
- Pupils show scant regard for the impact of their behaviour on each other, staff and visitors. Pupils are verbally and physically threatening towards staff and peers. They pay little heed to their teachers and other adults.
- Home-school relationships are poor. There are too few opportunities for parents and carers to be involved in school life. Parents do not receive information routinely about how their children are getting on.
- Safeguarding is ineffective. Leaders have not ensured that staff have the training and support to understand and carry out their responsibilities effectively. Bullying is not dealt with effectively. Leaders do not carry out routine checks on alternative providers.
- Attendance is poor. The overwhelming majority of pupils are persistently absent. On average, pupils are absent from school for nearly half of the school week. Pupils who do attend school are often out of lessons.
- Leaders, including governors and trustees, do not have the capacity to turn the school around. The headteacher, who joined the school three months ago, has a temporary appointment. The chair of governors is also newly appointed.
- The vast majority of teaching does not take into account pupils' interests, abilities or prior learning. Teachers shy away from setting work which challenges pupils. As a result, pupils find lessons dull.
- The school's curriculum is not fit for purpose. It fails to enthuse pupils. Older pupils have too few choices when deciding which qualifications they wish to take. As a result, pupils leave the school without the essential knowledge and skills to stand them in good stead for their next steps in education, employment or training.
- Across the school, weak teaching, poor attitudes to learning and sporadic attendance hamper pupils' progress. Outcomes at the end of Year 11 for all groups are woeful.

### The school has the following strengths

- The recently appointed interim headteacher has an accurate view of the school's current performance. In the short time she has been in post, some improvements have been made.
- Pupils enjoy the opportunities to learn outdoors. Pupils relish the challenge of the John Muir programme, which is an environmental award scheme.

## Full report

In accordance with section 44(1) of 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.

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

- Take urgent action to make sure that pupils are safe by:
  - establishing a calm and orderly environment where all pupils and staff feel safe
  - providing further training and support for all staff to equip them with the necessary skills to deal effectively with pupils' challenging behaviour
  - ensuring that the designated safeguarding leader has the skills, resources, support and authority to carry out the role effectively
  - making sure that record-keeping is meticulous
  - ensuring that pupils are taught how to keep themselves safe through a carefully planned curriculum programme
  - ensuring that all risks are assessed thoroughly, actions to manage risks are suitable and checks are in place to make sure that agreed plans are adhered to
  - carrying out rigorous and robust checks on all alternative providers to make sure that pupils are safe when learning off-site
  - reducing persistent absence and improving attendance so that pupils are in school on time every day.
- Meet pupils' social, emotional and mental health needs effectively so that they are ready to learn by:
  - making sure that pupils understand how to keep themselves and others safe in school, online and in the community
  - making sure that staff and pupils have an accurate understanding of what bullying is
  - following up assiduously on all instances of bullying
  - providing all staff with effective training and support so that they can meet pupils' social, emotional and mental health needs
  - ensuring that pupils receive the help and support they need as set out in their education, health and care (EHC) plans.
- Improve teaching, learning and assessment so that all groups of pupils, especially the disadvantaged, those who have special educational needs (SEN) and/or disabilities and the most able, make much better progress by ensuring that all teachers:
  - meet the requirements set out in the teachers' standards
  - have the highest expectations of what pupils can achieve

- plan work which pupils find interesting and purposeful so that they develop positive attitudes and essential behaviours for learning, including resilience, independence and perseverance
  - plan learning which engages and challenges pupils, particularly the most able, and makes the best use of lesson time
  - assess pupils' learning accurately and set them work which is well matched to their abilities
  - make sure that pupils know how to improve their work and are given timely opportunities to respond to teachers' advice and to correct mistakes
  - put in place interventions to help pupils catch up so that all make better progress.
- Improve leadership and management at all levels, including governance, by:
- establishing a culture of high ambition for all pupils which is communicated to and shared by trustees, governors, leaders, staff, pupils and parents
  - ensuring that leaders and governors have up-to-date, reliable information about key aspects of the school's performance, including pupils' academic achievement, behaviour and attendance
  - reviewing the school's performance regularly and using the outcomes of these reviews to evaluate the effectiveness of the school's improvement plan and hold senior leaders to account
  - building the capacity of the local governing body, including through relevant training and support, so that governors have the skills, experience and expertise to expedite school improvement
  - providing middle leaders with time, resources and support to ensure that they contribute to the raising of standards in their subjects across the school
  - checking regularly on the progress that the different groups of pupils make and taking swift action if any group is not achieving as well as it should
  - making sure that monitoring focuses on the impact of teaching on pupils' learning
  - planning a cohesive curriculum which meets the needs of pupils and enables teachers to build on pupils' prior learning across the full range of subjects
  - ensuring that parents receive regular, up-to-date information about how well their children are getting on
  - making sure that the additional funding to support disadvantaged pupils and those who have SEN and/or disabilities is well used to improve outcomes for eligible pupils.

An external review of governance should be undertaken in order to assess how this aspect of leadership and management may be improved.

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

## Inspection judgements

### Effectiveness of leadership and management

### Inadequate

- Leaders, including governors and trustees, have failed to make sure that pupils and staff are safe. The quality of education at St John's Wood is very poor. The scale of the challenge which faces leaders is very considerable.
- The lack of a strong, stable team of leaders and staff with the skills and expertise to identify and implement the improvements needed has hampered leaders' efforts to reverse the school's decline.
- Leaders, including governors, have failed to review the school's performance regularly. Leaders have not evaluated the effectiveness of the school's improvement plan. As a consequence, leaders, including governors, have not held senior and middle leaders, as well as staff, to account for pupils' poor performance.
- The poorly planned curriculum is unsuitable for the pupils. The curriculum design reflects the skills and knowledge of the staff rather than the pupils' needs. The range of qualifications offered is too restricted to meet the diverse needs, interests and aptitudes of pupils. A narrow curriculum offer at key stage 4 means that some pupils are following courses which do not interest them or prepare them well for post-16 education. Too little consideration is given to the organisation of the school timetable. Moreover, too many of the oldest pupils are on part-time timetables which are not reviewed routinely.
- The school fails to equip pupils with the necessary skills to cope with study, work and everyday life when they move on from St John's Wood. Pupils' poor attitudes to learning, a lack of respect for others and lamentable academic outcomes are endemic across the school. Pupils realise too late the importance of a good education if they are to achieve their ambitions. Pupils who spoke to inspectors feel let down by the school.
- Subject leadership is weak. These staff do not have the training, support or resources to carry out their roles and responsibilities effectively. As a result, they do not make a positive difference to the quality of teaching or to the curriculum.
- Leaders have not identified the training and support needs of staff. They have not made sure that teachers keep up to date with their subject knowledge. Leaders have not ensured that staff have the skills and expertise to meet the diverse range of pupils' needs. They do not check that staff understand and apply the school's policies and procedures correctly and consistently. Consequently, too many teachers do not meet the teachers' standards. Staff feel ill-equipped to do their jobs well.
- Leaders do not ensure that additional funding to support disadvantaged pupils and pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities is used well. The school does not have a strategy for allocating pupil premium funding this year. In addition, there has been no evaluation of how effectively this funding has been used in the past. Consequently, eligible pupils do not reap the benefits of the additional funding to help them overcome their barriers to learning.
- The appointment of the special educational needs coordinator is recent. Leaders have not ensured that this member of staff has the experience and expertise to carry out this key role effectively. Leaders do not ensure that pupils receive the specialist help

and support that they need as set out in their EHC plans. Moreover, there is no strategic deployment of resources, interventions or specialist staff training across the school to make sure that these pupils' needs are met effectively. As a result, the school does not help pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities overcome their barriers to learning.

- The new interim headteacher has an honest and accurate view of the school's performance. Within the last few weeks, the local authority, the trust and the interim headteacher have set out a plan which provides a roadmap to improvement. Recent support from the trust and local authority is helping leaders begin to make some improvements. However, this support to the school falls far short of what is needed. Moreover, not everyone supporting the school understands how rudimentary the issues are, so advice and guidance are not always pitched appropriately.
- The school has improved the quality and timeliness of information it shares with other agencies about children looked after. The headteacher insists that the school is represented at meetings about these pupils now. The school is now discharging its responsibilities for this group of pupils. However, a lack of reliable information about pupils' performance means it is not possible to evaluate with any certainty how well these pupils are getting on.
- The headteacher has taken decisive action to overcome the school's historically poor relationships with parents. The headteacher has spent time talking to parents about their children and the school. She ensured that parents received reports on their children at the end of last term. However, parents remain dissatisfied with the school and its staff.
- It is recommended that the school should not appoint newly qualified teachers.

### **Governance of the school**

- Governance is weak. Membership of the local governing body is depleted. A number of members have resigned recently. Governors do not have the experience and expertise to carry out their responsibilities.
- Governors rely on the information provided to them by leaders to evaluate the school's performance. They do not take steps to reassure themselves that the information given is accurate. Consequently, governors have failed to take the urgent and decisive action required to resolve the weaknesses in the school's performance.
- The trustees have taken action when they have had serious concerns about the performance or conduct of staff. However, trustees have not ensured that there are sufficient effective measures in place to support the interim headteacher and new chair of governors. This is a serious oversight given the scale of the challenge facing these new leaders.

### **Safeguarding**

- The arrangements for safeguarding are not effective.
- Leaders have not ensured that pupils are safe. The school's policy does not comply with statutory requirements. The school's recording and reporting systems are chaotic. Until recently, the school failed to attend multi-agency meetings for pupils and their

families. Not all pupils can identify a trusted member of school staff they would share any worries or concerns with. The school's curriculum does not provide sufficient planned opportunities to teach pupils about possible risks and how to keep themselves safe. Pupils and staff report that the behaviour of some pupils scares and intimidates them.

- Effective support from the local authority's safeguarding team has strengthened the school's systems and procedures. Moreover, recent training has helped staff, including the designated safeguarding officers, understand and carry out their roles and responsibilities more effectively. Leaders ensure that statutory checks are carried out on staff before they start working at the school.

### Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

### Inadequate

- Far too much teaching fails to engage, challenge and enthuse pupils. Poor subject knowledge, weak assessment practice and lack of training mean that teachers do not plan lessons which 'hook' pupils into learning.
- Pupils find lessons dull. The work set is too easy, mundane and repetitive most of the time. Teachers avoid giving pupils tasks which require them to think hard and work things out for themselves.
- Across the curriculum, there are limited opportunities for pupils to hone their literacy skills. Teaching of writing focuses on punctuation and spelling at the expense of composition and effect. Pupils do not have opportunities to edit, refine and improve their work. Pupils pay little heed to their teachers' comments and suggestions. Opportunities to practise reading and writing are insufficient to enable pupils to make the rapid progress needed to catch up to their peers nationally. As a result, pupils lack the literacy skills essential for day-to-day life.
- The school does not promote a love of reading. There are very few books displayed around the school. Pupils cannot talk about their favourite genres of books and authors. Pupils place little value on reading for leisure or information.
- Teachers' assessments of pupils' learning are inaccurate. They do not have the skills and knowledge required to confidently and reliably evaluate pupils' work. Pupils are not always clear about the qualifications that they are working towards, the level that they are working at and what more they need to do to reach the standard required.
- Teachers and support staff provide too much support for pupils' learning. There are very few opportunities for pupils to work independently, grapple with tricky problems and make mistakes. Pupils do not acquire independent learning skills as they move through the school.
- Too often, lessons are interrupted by incidents of poor behaviour. As a matter of routine, pupils refuse to work, walk out of lessons and disrupt the learning of others around the school.
- Teachers generally follow the school's marking policy. However, not all teachers model the standards of handwriting and presentation that they expect from pupils.

- Parents do not routinely receive information about how well their children are getting on at school. There are limited opportunities both formally and informally for parents to talk to teachers about their child's progress.
- The interim headteacher and deputy headteacher have a good understanding of the key features of effective lessons. However, in the past, monitoring of teaching and learning has been weak and inconsistent.
- There are some classes where pupils make better progress. They enjoy practical learning, in particular those lessons which take place outdoors. Pupils relish their achievements, such as working towards the John Muir Award, and are keen to share their successes. In these subjects, relationships are better, pupils' behaviour is more conducive to learning and they have a greater pride in their work.

## Personal development, behaviour and welfare

## Inadequate

### Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is inadequate.
- Pupils show little respect to each other and to staff. Swearing is commonplace and pupils pay no heed to staff requests to use more appropriate language. Pupils have scant regard for the impact of their behaviour on other people. Office staff routinely experience abuse from pupils.
- Physically and verbally threatening behaviours are frequent. However, only one bullying incident was recorded last year by the school. Pupils do not have a clear understanding of what constitutes bullying and how to deal with it. Pupils who spoke to inspectors reported that there had been occasions when they felt intimidated and threatened by other pupils. There is no convincing evidence that staff are keeping pupils safe from bullying.
- The school does not have a systematic approach to assessing, planning and evaluating the curriculum in regard to pupils' personal development. There are insufficient opportunities at a class, group and individual level to help pupils overcome their barriers to learning. As a result, pupils do not acquire the coping strategies they need to help them deal with the rigours of the school day.
- Checks on alternative providers are erratic. At least one provider is not registered, despite providing education for pupils who have an EHC plan or a statement of special educational needs. A number of pupils do not have access to full-time education. The school does not check closely and frequently enough on these providers to reassure themselves that pupils are safe and the quality of education is acceptable.
- The school nurse has provided some bespoke sessions for the small number of girls who attend the school. She has paid close attention to their individual needs and matched the sessions accordingly. These sessions have encouraged pupils to take better care of themselves.
- Each year group is encouraged to agree a series of enrichment activities to take place over the school year. Pupils have enjoyed watching a football match at the Etihad Stadium, going on a fishing trip and visiting Auschwitz. Staff report that pupils'

behaviour on trips and visits is generally socially acceptable. At its best, pupils' good behaviour is complimented by members of the public.

- The local authority young persons' adviser works with the school and other key partners to help plan post-16 provision for the pupils. In Year 10, most pupils attend the local further education college one day a week. This taste of college life encourages pupils to apply for post-16 courses with the same provider. The interim headteacher has taken a number of pupils on visits to colleges to raise aspirations and motivate them to gain essential qualifications before they leave the school. However, the school has no member of staff with responsibility for careers education, information, advice and guidance. Record-keeping is slapdash, with no records of what actions have been completed or planned.

## Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is inadequate.
- The overwhelming majority of pupils are persistently absent from school. The attendance of all pupils over the first half of this year has declined even further compared to the previous academic year. The school is reliant on the efforts of the local authority attendance team to follow up on pupils' absence. Although the school does check on pupils' absence with telephone calls home, and staff go out to pupils' homes, these actions have limited impact. Moreover, a number of pupils, particularly at key stage 4, are on part-time timetables. There are no plans in place to review these arrangements.
- When pupils are in school, they are routinely out of lessons. Some wilfully disturb the learning of their peers or the work of adults in the school as they raise their voices, bang on doors and interrupt lessons and meetings.
- Both in lessons and around school, staff provide constant high-level supervision in an effort to maintain order. Staff continually coax and cajole pupils to follow instructions and complete work. Although staff report that there is an increasing proportion of 'good days', staff are 'walking on eggshells' every lesson, every day.
- Staff are overly generous with praise. They appease pupils continually in an effort to encourage them to engage. However, this does not give pupils accurate feedback and help them to improve their attitudes to learning.
- Recent training for staff in de-escalation techniques has had a positive impact on the number of occasions staff are using physical intervention. However, the frequency, severity and length of incidents have not reduced.

## Outcomes for pupils

## Inadequate

- The school has no reliable information about how well pupils are achieving. Leaders are wholly reliant on historical examination results to evaluate pupils' performance.
- Outcomes at the end of Year 11 in 2017 were very low. Weak teaching, high rates of persistent absence and poor attitudes to learning resulted in rates of progress significantly below those of other pupils nationally.
- This specialist school's failure to meet pupils' social, emotional and mental health needs



means that pupils fail to overcome the barriers to learning as set out in their EHC plans. This serious shortfall is hampering pupils' academic progress.

- Although pupils gain some recognised qualifications, including GCSEs, they gain very few qualifications other than in English and mathematics. For example, in 2017, although all pupils were entered for English and mathematics GCSEs, there was only one entry for art and design, geography and design and technology.
- Disadvantaged pupils underachieved considerably at the end of Year 11 in 2017. Their performance fell far short of that of other pupils nationally. Leaders have failed to make effective use of pupil premium funding to remove barriers for these pupils to help them make faster progress.
- While all pupils underachieve considerably, the school's most able pupils make even less progress than their classmates. Teachers fail to plan lessons which challenge these pupils and help them achieve their potential.
- Current pupils, including disadvantaged pupils and the most able, continue to underachieve. Work in books, observations in lessons and discussions with pupils confirm that pupils' progress across almost all subjects and year groups is deplorable.
- The school's own information confirms that results at the end of key stage 4 are likely to be similar to last year. In addition to the myriad of challenges, this year's academic performance is hampered further by staffing issues. For example, older pupils who were working towards a design and technology qualification have had their course cancelled.
- All pupils in the 2017 Year 11 cohort moved on to education or training. However, the school was not able to provide information about the courses pupils enrolled on and how well pupils are getting on.
- The 'small steps progress measures' used by the school to assess and track pupils' learning mask their sluggish progress. Staff do not interrogate the information they use to evaluate pupils' performance. According to the school's own data, most pupils are making at least expected and often better-than-expected rates of progress across the school. Staff have not questioned the reliability of the data, given that most pupils are persistently absent, pupils are absent for well over two days a week and published data shows how far pupils lag behind other pupils nationally.

## School details

Unique reference number	140176
Local authority	Cheshire East
Inspection number	10048523

This inspection was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. The inspection was also deemed a section 5 inspection under the same Act.

Type of school	Special
School category	Academy special sponsor-led
Age range of pupils	11 to 16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	43
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair	Jon Billings
Interim Headteacher	Alexis Bull
Telephone number	01625 383 045
Website	<a href="http://www.stjohnswood.cheshire.sch.uk">www.stjohnswood.cheshire.sch.uk</a>
Email address	<a href="mailto:admin@stjohnswood.cheshire.sch.uk">admin@stjohnswood.cheshire.sch.uk</a>
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected

## Information about this school

- The school converted to academy status in September 2016. The school is sponsored by The Adelaide Academy Trust, which is backed by Adelaide School, a special school for pupils who have social, emotional and mental health difficulties. There is one other school managed by the trust, Finch Woods Academy. There is also a local governing body.
- There has been significant turbulence in staffing at the school since it opened. The interim headteacher took up post in November 2017.
- There are a number of vacant posts on the local governing body following several recent resignations. The chair of governors was appointed in October 2017.
- The school caters for pupils who have social, emotional and mental health difficulties. All pupils have an EHC plan or a statement of special educational needs.

- The proportion of pupils who come from minority ethnic groups is much lower than the national average.
- The proportion of pupils who speak English as an additional language is much lower than the national average.
- The proportion of disadvantaged pupils supported by the pupil premium funding is above the national average. Currently, there are seven pupils attending the school who are looked after.
- There are many more boys than girls on roll.
- The school works with a number of alternative providers to broaden the curriculum offer for pupils. These include Reaseheath College, the Community Volunteer Service, Total People and Climb.

## Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed teaching and learning across the school, including joint observations with the headteacher and deputy headteacher. Inspectors checked work in a range of pupils' books
- Discussions were held with senior leaders, middle leaders, the chair of the local governing body, the chief executive officer of The Adelaide Academy Trust and representatives of the local authority.
- Inspectors examined a wide range of documentation, including that relating to safeguarding, behaviour and attendance, school improvement planning and assessment information.
- Inspectors spoke formally with pupils as well as informally during the school day and observed them during breaktimes.
- There were five responses to Parent View, Ofsted's online survey. Inspectors spoke to one parent.
- Inspectors spoke formally with a group of staff. Five members of staff provided written responses on their views of the school. Inspectors also considered the school's own recent staff survey.
- The inspection was carried out following a complaint made to Ofsted which raised serious concerns. Her Majesty's Chief Inspector decided that an inspection of the school should take place to follow up the whole-school issues that were raised. Inspectors sought to establish the quality of leadership and management, standards of behaviour, the quality of teaching, how well pupils achieve and whether pupils are well cared for and safe at the school.

## Inspection team

Pippa Jackson Maitland, lead inspector	Her Majesty's Inspector
Sue Eastwood	Her Majesty's Inspector
Matt Wilson	Ofsted Inspector

Any complaints about the inspection or the report should be made following the procedures set out in the guidance 'Raising concerns and making a complaint about Ofsted', which is available from Ofsted's website: [www.gov.uk/government/publications/complaints-about-ofsted](http://www.gov.uk/government/publications/complaints-about-ofsted). If you would like Ofsted to send you a copy of the guidance, please telephone 0300 123 4234, or email [enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk](mailto:enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk).

In the report, 'disadvantaged pupils' refers to those pupils who attract government pupil premium funding: pupils claiming free school meals at any point in the last six years and pupils in care or who left care through adoption or another formal route. [www.gov.uk/pupil-premium-information-for-schools-and-alternative-provision-settings](http://www.gov.uk/pupil-premium-information-for-schools-and-alternative-provision-settings).

You can use Parent View to give Ofsted your opinion on your child's school. Ofsted will use the information parents and carers provide when deciding which schools to inspect and when and as part of the inspection.

You can also use Parent View to find out what other parents and carers think about schools in England. You can visit [www.parentview.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.parentview.ofsted.gov.uk), or look for the link on the main Ofsted website: [www.gov.uk/government/organisations/ofsted](http://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/ofsted).

The Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted) regulates and inspects to achieve excellence in the care of children and young people, and in education and skills for learners of all ages. It regulates and inspects childcare and children's social care, and inspects the Children and Family Court Advisory and Support Service (Cafcass), schools, colleges, initial teacher training, further education and skills, adult and community learning, and education and training in prisons and other secure establishments. It assesses council children's services, and inspects services for children looked after, safeguarding and child protection.

If you would like a copy of this document in a different format, such as large print or Braille, please telephone 0300 123 1231, or email [enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk](mailto:enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk).

You may reuse this information (not including logos) free of charge in any format or medium, under the terms of the Open Government Licence. To view this licence, visit [www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/doc/open-government-licence/](http://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/doc/open-government-licence/), write to the Information Policy Team, The National Archives, Kew, London TW9 4DU, or email: [psi@nationalarchives.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:psi@nationalarchives.gsi.gov.uk).

This publication is available at [www.gov.uk/ofsted](http://www.gov.uk/ofsted).

Interested in our work? You can subscribe to our monthly newsletter for more information and updates: <http://eepurl.com/iTrDn>.

Piccadilly Gate  
Store Street  
Manchester  
M1 2WD

T: 0300 123 4234  
Textphone: 0161 618 8524  
E: [enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk](mailto:enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk)  
W: [www.gov.uk/ofsted](http://www.gov.uk/ofsted)

© Crown copyright 2018