



St John's Wood Community School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 131733
Local Authority Cheshire
Inspection number 293832
Inspection date 10 January 2007
Reporting inspector John Atkinson

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

Type of school	Special	School address	Longridge
School category	Community special		Knutsford
Age range of pupils	11–16		Cheshire WA16 8PA
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	01565 634578
Number on roll (school)	50	Fax number	01565 750187
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair	Mr JW Edwards
		Headteacher	Mr M Burgess
Date of previous school inspection	18 June 2001		

Age group	Inspection date	Inspection number
11–16	10 January 2007	293832

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one Additional Inspector.

Description of the school

St John's Wood is a community school for secondary age pupils with social, emotional and behavioural difficulties. All pupils have a statement of special educational need. The school serves a very wide geographical area covering the whole of Cheshire and many pupils travel a long distance. There are no pupils whose first language is not English. There are eight looked after pupils and, as a proportion of the number on roll, this is significantly higher than average. The percentage of pupils who qualify for free school meals is well above average.

Key for inspection grades

Grade 1	Outstanding
Grade 2	Good
Grade 3	Satisfactory
Grade 4	Inadequate

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

This is a good school that gives good value for money and has improved well since its last inspection. Pupils enjoy coming to school because they feel safe and secure and receive good support from adults whom they respect and trust. As one pupil said, 'In some lessons I struggle but with the help I get, I really enjoy them.' The staff work well as a team and establish a calm, orderly and purposeful ethos. This enables pupils to grow in confidence, establish good work habits and display sensible and mature behaviour that contrasts sharply with their previous habits. Staff have high expectations of how pupils behave and this sets the tone for how the school functions in all aspects of its work. The relationships between staff and pupils are very good and lead to pupils being confident in sharing anxieties and concerns. They are particularly pleased that any bullying is dealt with firmly and quickly and many comment positively on how easy it is to settle into school, make new friends and resolve differences amicably.

The curriculum is rich with many exciting events and activities, including a wide range of trips, resulting in pupils' good spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. The work-related curriculum for older pupils offers good opportunities to prepare them well for their future economic well-being. The outcome is that pupils have a mature and informed approach to planning the next phase of their education or training and are well placed to take advantage of opportunities for employment. The many visitors to school – musicians, sports coaches, the fire service – push pupils to 'have a go' at different activities that many would have previously avoided due to a lack of confidence or fear of failure. As a result, pupils have a greater sense of self-belief, work collaboratively in teams and make a more positive contribution to the school and wider community. They tackle new experiences with enthusiasm and ambition.

Pupils' achievements are good. They make good progress in mathematics, science, and information and communication technology (ICT). Their progress in English is satisfactory because they have limited opportunities to develop the full range of writing skills. Pupils start school with attainment levels that are well below those expected for their age and with negative attitudes towards learning. By the time they leave school, they achieve good GCSE results, particularly in art and design, and design and technology. Most pupils complete the certificate of Preparation for Working Life and, where appropriate, have access to an additional motivational work placement. The outcome is that pupils have a good understanding of how they can make a more successful future for themselves.

Pupils' personal development is good and makes a significant contribution to the improvements in their behaviour, resulting in greater levels of self-control and better handling of their anger and frustrations. Pupils' health is a key priority for the school and the programme to support healthy lifestyles is extensive. The physical education curriculum is varied and challenging and a host of healthy eating and drinking options are available. Pupils involve themselves energetically in team games and are keen to participate in any residential trips where outdoor pursuits are available. The school's changing facilities for physical education are inadequate for both boys and girls and the pupils themselves have voiced their concerns about this.

Teaching is good. Four new teachers have recently joined the school and, with good support from the leadership team, have quickly settled and added to the overall quality of teaching and learning. Teachers make good use of their knowledge of pupils' personal backgrounds to create a positive climate for learning. They are skilled in behaviour management and use different teaching styles to accommodate pupils' needs. Teachers do not use the information of pupils' prior attainments well enough in planning the learning activities and in setting targets to enable pupils to reach the next steps in their learning.

Behind all of this good practice lies a senior leadership team that is clearly focused on maintaining a good quality of provision and driving forward new initiatives. They provide good support to all staff and lead by example, resulting in a staff team with high morale, high expectations and a clear sense of direction. Monitoring and evaluation are good and contribute to effective self-evaluation. The governing body support and challenge the school so that it remains on its toes in striving for improvement. Governors are skilled in celebrating the school's successes as well as probing and prompting it in the search for the best for the children. As the chair of governors commented, 'we push the school to be willing to go that extra mile for the children'.

What the school should do to improve further

- Raise standards and achievement in English.
- Use information about pupils' prior attainment more effectively in planning learning activities and in setting individual targets.
- Provide adequate changing facilities for physical education.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Pupils make adequate progress in reading, spelling and writing but have limited opportunities to develop writing for different purposes. In science and mathematics pupils achieve well. In 2006, six of the seven Year 11 pupils achieved six GCSE passes. Key Stage 3 pupils make good progress in mathematics, particularly in mental mathematics where pupils improve their speed in calculations. In science, good progress is aided by the emphasis on science investigations and the careful attention to writing up their findings. Progress in English is hampered by the emphasis on the technical aspects of writing at the expense of developing a range of writing styles. Across the curriculum, for example, in physical education, history, geography, art and design, music, and design and technology, pupils make good progress and the overall impact is that pupils are developing a wide range of skills that will significantly assist them in their economic well-being. A significant strength of the school is the rate of progress that looked after children make. They do at least as well as other pupils and in some cases better. Pupils make good progress in their personal development, particularly in their economic well-being because of the good work related and enterprise skills that they develop.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils make good progress in their personal development and are very well equipped for when they leave school. Routines are well established and clear boundaries are defined so pupils know what behaviour is expected of them. The effect is that pupils feel secure and safe from any form of harassment leading to improvements in behaviour and growing respect for each other and the whole-school community. The structured reward system celebrates pupils' successes and is effective in building and boosting their self-esteem. As a result, the number of exclusions has declined sharply in the past two years. Pupils are health conscious and participate extensively in the wide array of sporting activities offered by staff and sporting coaches. Attendance is satisfactory. Most pupils attend well and many have really improved their attendance levels. A minority of pupils are very poor attendees and the school is actively trying to work effectively with these pupils. The school council is an active forum that pupils aspire to be elected to. Members are at ease in voicing their opinions and respond maturely to the responsibilities that membership carries. All pupils follow work related programmes, resulting in the acquisition of appropriate skills to prepare them well for the future.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Teaching is good and leads to good gains in learning. Effective use is made of information and communication technology to explain and demonstrate the expected learning outcomes. As a result, students and pupils are fully engaged and interested in the planned activities. Teachers have high expectations of behaviour and manage pupils effectively, enabling them to take advantage of the learning opportunities made available. Teachers and teaching assistants work well together in establishing a positive learning climate with high levels of support. Teachers are enthusiastic and often passionate about their subjects; for example, the deputy headteacher's teaching of mathematics is very good and leads to pupils making good progress in their learning. Teachers do not make sufficient use of the information about pupils' prior attainment levels in setting targets and in the planning of activities to help them reach the next steps in their learning.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The curriculum and its enrichment are good. There are many opportunities for pupils to participate in music, enterprise and physical education. The good opportunities for work experience are influential in motivating pupils, widening their horizons and raising their aspirations with the effect that there is a growing confidence and desire to experiment in new activities. Regular visitors to the school are effective in using their

expertise to motivate pupils and this results in individuals making good progress in personal, social and academic skills. The English curriculum is narrow and limits pupils' progress in writing.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

This is a safe and caring school where pupils feel valued and respected. They feel they are given good support in controlling their anger and improving their behaviour and attitudes to learning. Arrangements to safeguard pupils are thorough and this means that the most vulnerable pupils are very well supported. Child protection arrangements and those to ensure everyone's health, welfare and safety are in place. The guidance that pupils receive about their personal development is good. However, pupils could be given clearer advice about what their targets are and how they can achieve them. Pupils do not feel overawed by the challenges they face and the support they receive helps them to be determined to do their best.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

The headteacher provides good leadership and is well supported by the senior leadership team in setting out a clear vision for the school. The governing body is astute and very effective in rigorously monitoring the work of the school. The impact is a staff team with high morale and high expectations, and the school having a good capacity to improve further. Good support is available to new appointments and there is a strong commitment from all staff to develop the expertise required to meet the needs of a challenging and diverse group of learners.

Inspection judgements

Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate	School Overall
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Overall effectiveness

How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners?	2
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	2
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	2
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	2
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	2
The standards ¹ reached by learners	4
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	2
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	2

Personal development and well-being

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	2
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2
The behaviour of learners	2
The attendance of learners	3
How well learners enjoy their education	2
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	2
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	2

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	2
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	2
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	2

¹ Grade 1 - Exceptionally and consistently high; Grade 2 - Generally above average with none significantly below average; Grade 3 - Broadly average to below average; Grade 4 - Exceptionally low.

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	2
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	2
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets	2
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	2
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	2
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	2
Do procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements?	Yes
Does this school require special measures?	No
Does this school require a notice to improve?	No

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

I really enjoyed the day that I spent in your school last week. Thank you for making me welcome, sharing your opinions about the school and talking about what you enjoyed about your lessons. I was impressed by the way that you helped each other, how you behaved in lessons and around the school and the respect shown for the school environment and each other. I entirely agree with your views about the good things that are available to you. You have many activities to take part in and the work experiences are particularly helpful in preparing you for the future. I think you should be proud of your own achievements and the improvements you have made with your behaviour. I agree with your views that you go to a good school because the staff help you to learn in every subject, make learning fun and have high expectations of you. I have asked the school to do three specific things so that your education is even better. The school will be working hard to:

- raise standards in English
- use information about your previous work to set you challenging targets
- provide adequate changing facilities for physical education.

I think that you can help yourselves and the school by continuing with your positive attitudes, hard work and improved behaviour. It is really important that you make the most out of the opportunities school provides for you because then you can achieve well in your exams and, as one of you said to me, 'have better chances in life'.

I hope you keep up your good work and continue to be as helpful to each other as I saw when I was in school.