

John Watson School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	123333
Local Authority	Oxfordshire
Inspection number	314562
Inspection dates	18–19 September 2007
Reporting inspector	Margaret Goodchild

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	2–16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	66
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr Chris Cleaver
Headteacher	Mrs Sally Withey
Date of previous school inspection	30 June 2003
School address	Littleworth Road Wheatley OX33 1NN
Telephone number	01865 452725
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Age group	2-16
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by an Additional Inspector.

Description of the school

The school provides for pupils with severe and profound learning difficulties, some of whom also have autistic spectrum disorders or behavioural difficulties. It is located on two sites, both of which offer integrated provision that enables pupils to learn alongside their mainstream peers. Nursery and primary aged pupils share a campus with Wheatley Primary School and older pupils are accommodated in a new building on the campus of Wheatley Park, a nearby secondary school. The headteacher of John Watson School is also head of Wheatley Nursery School, which provides fully inclusive provision for mainstream children as well as for those with learning difficulties and disabilities who are on the roll of both schools. Being designated as a school for 2 to 16 year olds, John Watson School does not officially make provision for students at post-16. Despite this, four students in Years 12 and 13 have been placed there by the local authority pending a decision about the education of 16 to 19 year olds in the county.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

This is a satisfactory school with some good features. Parents think highly of the school and many wrote to express their satisfaction. They particularly value the school's strong partnership with them and the way it cares for their children, commenting on 'the kindness, concern and understanding of the staff'.

Pupils enjoy very positive relationships with the staff and are made to feel that they really matter. As a result, they make good progress in their personal development and gain a good deal of enjoyment from their time in school. They particularly enjoy the opportunities to work alongside mainstream pupils, where they concentrate well and try hard.

Standards are necessarily well below average as a result of pupils' learning difficulties and disabilities. However, achievement is good in the Foundation Stage and it is satisfactory in the school as a whole in response to satisfactory teaching and a good curriculum. Children in the Foundation Stage make good progress and get off to a good start in the inclusive nursery setting. Throughout the school, pupils have individual targets but these do not always inform lesson planning as much as they should. At times, pupils undertake exactly the same task regardless of their very different learning needs. When this happens, the most able pupils are not challenged enough and pupils with complex needs are not involved as much as they should be.

The school makes satisfactory provision for the small number of students at post-16 who are funded by the local authority to remain at John Watson after the school's official leaving age. The local authority is engaged in consultation about provision for 16 to 19 year olds but this is the second year of an arrangement that contravenes the school's designation for pupils aged two to 16.

A new teacher has just been appointed for the four students at post-16 who are remaining in the school beyond the normal age when they should be moving on. Last year, there were too few students to make the allocation of a full-time teacher financially viable, and the two students in the school at that time were supported by two teaching assistants and a part-time teacher. Largely through the goodwill and application of the staff concerned, the students nevertheless succeeded in gaining ASDAN Bronze and Silver Challenge Awards and some AQA unit awards in basic skills. College links help to extend the satisfactory teaching and the fairly limited range of learning experiences provided in school. Work experience placements are being sought for all the students but the school does not have the necessary facilities to support them in acquiring important skills for independent living. Very good relationships between staff and students ensure that they are well cared for and make good progress in their personal development.

Leadership and management are satisfactory. Following the last inspection, the school made good progress in addressing issues raised at that time but absences and gaps in the senior management team since then mean that school improvement has been satisfactory overall. Recent changes to the management structure, such as the establishment of a new assistant headteacher post and of faculty co-ordinators, is a positive development. More time is needed, however, for managers as a whole to find a way of working to maximum effect and a number of new systems have not yet had time to bring about consistent practice across the school as a whole. As a result, capacity to improve is satisfactory. The governing body is ably led by a perceptive chair and a small number of governors bring valuable expertise, but several are quite

new and governors are only just beginning to collect information about the school's work for themselves. The school provides satisfactory value for money.

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

The school makes good provision for children in the Foundation Stage. The opportunity to learn and play alongside mainstream children in the fully inclusive setting of Wheatley Nursery School provides the best of both worlds for children with learning difficulties and disabilities. Good teaching is underpinned by very thorough planning and record keeping. Teaching assistants are used well and make a strong contribution to children's learning. The curriculum reflects national guidance for this age group well, and the outdoor area contributes significantly to children's development. They make good progress overall in the six areas of learning. However, experiences are not always matched fully to the needs of those with the most complex difficulties. The Foundation Stage is led and managed well.

What the school should do to improve further

- Ensure that teachers consistently match tasks to pupils' individual needs, including those of the most able and pupils with complex difficulties.
- Strengthen the effectiveness of senior leaders, faculty co-ordinators and governors to increase the rate of school improvement.
- Work with the local authority to reach a decision about the designation of the school with regard to the placement of students at post-16.

A small proportion of the schools whose overall effectiveness is judged satisfactory but which have areas of underperformance will receive a monitoring visit by an Ofsted inspector before their next section 5 inspection.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 3

Parents are generally of the opinion that their children are making good progress. Whilst some pupils achieve well in areas such as personal, social and health education, in the acquisition of independence skills and in physical development, progress towards the targets in pupils' individual education plans is satisfactory overall. This is because some pupils make more progress than others within lessons and some classes do better than others. The most able pupils and those with the most complex needs do not always make as much progress as the rest of the class when work is not matched sufficiently to their needs. In the school as whole, pupils make satisfactory progress in literacy, numeracy and information and communication technology (ICT). The outstanding opportunities for learning alongside mainstream pupils contribute well to pupils' achievement, especially at the secondary site. This is of particular benefit to the most able pupils at Key Stage 4 who integrate into the mainstream school to study a range of subjects at GCSE in addition to the ASDAN accreditation that all pupils gain in Year 11.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Personal development is good. Pupils have good attitudes to school and attendance is above average. They behave well, show a good level of concentration and take a pride in their achievement. Pupils enjoy positive and trusting relationships with the staff and make good

progress in their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. They learn about the importance of making healthy choices, take part in physical activities and have a growing understanding about the importance of staying safe. They respond well to opportunities to take responsibility, where older pupils for instance act as buddies to those on the primary site, and the school listens to their views. However, it does not have a school council to enable pupils to contribute their views regularly to school improvement. Speaking about their experience of integrating into mainstream school, they say, 'Everyone is nice in my lessons and helps me if I need it' and 'I like going on the trampoline in PE and seeing all my friends in drama'. In their time at John Watson School, pupils develop important personal qualities for the future and make satisfactory progress in the basic skills that are likely to help them when they leave school.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

Although there are examples of good teaching on both the sites, teaching is satisfactory overall because there is inconsistency in practice within and between classes. Teachers nearly always manage pupils' behaviour well, staff enjoy very positive relationships with the pupils and teaching assistants make a good contribution to pupils' learning. Teachers usually identify what they intend different groups of pupils to learn within a lesson. In the best practice, this leads to activities that are matched very carefully to the needs of individual pupils, providing exactly the right amount of challenge. At times, activities are not planned or structured well enough to ensure that all pupils make progress. Pupils' needs are assessed satisfactorily and managers have undertaken some checking to ensure that all teachers are using the assessment system effectively. Some remain more confident than others, however, in the accuracy of their judgements.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The curriculum is matched well to the needs of the pupils and imaginative links have begun to be forged between subjects. The school pays good attention to developing pupils' personal and social skills and to fostering their independence up to the end of Year 11. On both sites, pupils benefit from opportunities to mix socially and academically with mainstream pupils. The integration programme is particularly well established on the secondary site. The co-location of the school on two mainstream school sites has afforded particularly good opportunities for pupils to go on visits, including a number of residential trips, and to take part in out-of-school activities alongside mainstream pupils. In addition, John Watson pupils have good opportunities to take part in other special events such as 'reward days' and whole school performances. The curriculum provides satisfactory opportunities for pupils to develop literacy, numeracy and ICT skills. The school is, rightly, increasing opportunities for pupils to learn about the world of work.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

The school cares, guides and supports its pupils well, and parents say that they know their children are well looked after. Staff are appropriately checked to safeguard the pupils and thorough risk assessments are carried out. The school has good links with a number of agencies

and works closely with therapists. However, the use of switches and other aids to communication for pupils with more complex needs is less well established than it should be. Systems for promoting good behaviour are effective and the school provides parents with valuable information about how to manage their children's behaviour at home. Individual integration plans provide an effective means of checking what pupils have learnt during time spent in mainstream school as well as identifying any areas where they need additional help.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

Close collaboration for a number of months between the headteacher and a school improvement advisory teacher from the local authority has helped to bridge gaps in the senior leadership team. As a direct result of this joint working, a number of systems have been introduced, existing practice strengthened and a more thorough record is beginning to be kept to inform self-evaluation. The school's overall evaluation of its effectiveness is accurate and the right priorities for development are identified. However, the school development plan does not provide clear information about who is responsible for what or how success might be measured. A reasonable amount of monitoring takes place and data is analysed satisfactorily to check pupils' progress as a basis for setting reasonably challenging targets. The recent establishment of faculty co-ordinators is an innovative move which has the capacity to increase coherence between subjects as well as making co-ordination more manageable across the two sites. The newly built accommodation for secondary-aged pupils meets their needs well. Accommodation for younger pupils is broadly satisfactory although access for pupils with physical difficulties is limited within the adjoining mainstream primary school.

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Annex A

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?	3
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	2
The effectiveness of the Foundation Stage	2
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	3

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	3
The standards ¹ reached by learners	4
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	3
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	3

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 extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2
How well learners enjoy their education	2
The attendance of learners	2
The behaviour of learners	2
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	3
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	3

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	3
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.

Annex A

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	3
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	3
How effectively leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	3
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	3
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	3
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	3
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	3
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

2 October 2007

Dear Pupils

Inspection of John Watson School, Wheatley, OX33 1NN

Thank you for making me feel welcome when I visited your school. I enjoyed my visit and now I am writing to let you know what I found out about the school.

I can see why so many of your parents are pleased with the way the school helps you. All of the adults who work with you care about you and you all get on well together. This is partly why you enjoy school and behave well. It was lovely to see some of you learning in class with pupils from Wheatley Park School and I know you are really proud of the work that you do there. Some of you are also learning a lot in your classes at John Watson School, though sometimes some people learn more than others.

The headteacher and all the other people who work in the school did a lot after the last inspection to make the school better but then some of the people who have important jobs were away. The headteacher and other managers have been working hard again recently to make the school better for you. They have made some changes to the things they do and they want to make the school as good as they can. I have asked them to make sure that you always have work that is not too easy and not too difficult. I have also asked them to talk to the local authority about what would be best for students when they are old enough to leave school.

Best wishes

Ms M Goodchild (Lead inspector)