

St John's Wood Community School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	131733
Local Authority	Cheshire East
Inspection number	341208
Inspection dates	28–29 April 2010
Reporting inspector	Marian Thomas

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

Type of school	Special
School category	Community special
Age range of pupils	11–16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	44
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr JW Edwards
Headteacher	Mr M Burgess
Date of previous school inspection	10 January 2007
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by one additional inspector. The inspector observed 10 lessons taught by 10 teachers. The inspector met with school staff, members of the governing body and the school council. The inspector observed the school's work and looked at records of students' progress, curriculum policies and safeguarding documents. The views expressed by the 17 questionnaires returned from students' families were taken into account by the inspector.

The inspection reviewed many aspects of the school's work. It looked in detail at the following:

- students' work in mathematics in the classroom
- how well the curriculum is adapted to meet the needs of all students
- the progress of different groups of students
- how well governors support the school.

Information about the school

St John's Wood is a community school for secondary-age students with social, emotional and behavioural difficulties; many have additional special educational needs and/or disabilities. All students have a statement of special educational needs. The school serves a very wide geographical area covering Cheshire and surrounding areas; as a result, many students travel long distances. There are no students who speak English as an additional language and four students are in the care of the local authority. Currently, 16 students are eligible for free school meals. The school has been awarded Healthy Schools and Sportsmark accreditation.

Inspection grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory, and 4 is inadequate

Please turn to the glossary for a description of the grades and inspection terms

Inspection judgements

Overall effectiveness: how good is the school?

2

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

2

Main findings

St John's Wood is a good school. Staff care for and support students outstandingly well. As a result, all groups of students make good progress towards challenging targets. Students often arrive at St John's Wood with large gaps in learning. Because of the warm and friendly approach of staff they quickly re-engage and start to enjoy learning. Parents and carers appreciate this. Their views are reflected well in the comment, 'For the first time my son is really getting an education because the school and staff are excellent.'

The headteacher and senior leaders have high expectations of what students can achieve and ensure the quality of provision necessary for them to do so. The leadership team's evaluation of the school's effectiveness is accurate, rigorous and findings are acted upon to good effect. The school's strength is its ability to recognise and support the diverse needs of all students. This ensures that barriers to learning are minimised. Since the last inspection the school has improved standards in English. It has developed a more rigorous system for tracking students' progress. It demonstrates through this a good ability to improve further.

Students thoroughly enjoy school. They make good progress in their personal development and grow in confidence as they move through school. This is as a result of excellent care, guidance and support. Most are clear about how to stay healthy. Their behaviour is good and they feel safe. Excellent links with outside agencies ensure that students are well prepared for the next stage of their education.

Teaching is good in most subjects and is based on clear assessments of students' learning needs. Overall, progress is good. However, in a small number of lessons the pace is too slow and students make less progress. All groups of students make equally good progress, including those with severe learning difficulties and those who are looked after by the local authority. However, across the school, progress in mathematics is less good than in English and science.

A more detailed assessment system has been introduced since the last inspection. This ensures that monitoring and tracking of students' progress is more effective. As a result, teachers plan learning and set targets which increase students' progress. Behaviour is managed well both in and outside the classroom. Teaching assistants provide a good level of support in lessons. The curriculum has improved since the last inspection with new partnership initiatives enriching learning. However, in Key Stage 4 there are too few opportunities for students to undertake vocational courses. The welfare of students is given the highest priority and attendance is often well supported by outside agencies. However, overall attendance is only satisfactory.

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Senior managers are effective in moving the school forward. Members of the highly committed and supportive governing body visit the school regularly and are effective in monitoring its work and holding senior leaders to account. Partnerships with local organisations are well established and students have a good understanding of the local community. All staff know students exceptionally well and are sensitive to the circumstances in their lives which make them vulnerable.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve achievement in mathematics across the school so that it is in line with English and science by:
 - improving the monitoring of students' progress in mathematics
 - increasing the pace of some mathematics lessons to ensure that best use is made of learning time.
- Widen curriculum choices for Key Stage 4 students in order to increase opportunities for them to gain vocational qualifications.
- Improve relationships with the newly formed local authorities of Cheshire West and Chester educational welfare services in order to support and improve the attendance of students from these areas.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils**2**

Students arriving at school settle quickly because of the exceptionally friendly and welcoming atmosphere. This allows staff to assess their needs and provide individual learning programmes. These enable students to work consistently and achieve well in most areas of the curriculum. This was demonstrated well in an excellent food technology lesson where students were learning to create menus of local dishes from around the United Kingdom. Given the nature of students' learning needs, this was impressive. Skillful questioning by the teacher supported students and promoted their independent thinking skills well. As a result, students developed a better understanding of the importance of buying local ingredients to reduce food miles.

Staff set achievable targets for students in all key stages. These, coupled with the removal of barriers to learning, enable students to make good progress. However, students' progress in mathematics is less good than in English and science. Although school leaders have good plans to improve the targeting of resources, these are not yet fully implemented.

A small number of students in Key Stage 4 do not engage well with learning. Staff work hard to re-engage them by producing personalised learning plans. However, because of a lack of opportunities to undertake a wider selection of vocational courses, this is not always successful. Most of the students who follow a more academic pathway make good and sometimes outstanding progress because staff are skilled at building students' self-esteem. This, coupled with a good range of academic courses offered, ensures that most students leave with many qualifications and accreditations. Last year's school

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leavers successfully passed examinations in art, English, mathematics, science, information and communication technology (ICT), design technology, geography and preparation for working life.

All students who attend school have a statement of special educational needs because of their social and emotional needs. Some have additional learning difficulties. Because they often have large gaps in their education, attainment for the majority of students is well below national expectations. Because the needs of individual students are recognised and well supported, all groups make similar good progress.

Students feel safe because they know staff are supportive and help them at all times. They enjoy school immensely. As one student commented, 'Staff really understand us here and make sure lessons match our learning styles.' Many students recognise the importance of eating healthy meals. For example, they were knowledgeable about which foods were healthy and which were not. They noted that school dinners usually fell into the healthy category. Physical education and sport are strengths of the school despite the limitations of the school site. Many students enjoy the sporting opportunities offered and appreciate the part these play in a healthy lifestyle. Students make a good contribution to the community both in and outside school by listening to and appreciating the needs of others. For example, students are frequently involved in community projects in the community centre next door. They have also developed a good understanding of the global community through links with schools and an orphanage in Africa. This has greatly increased students' understanding of the needs of others. Students' good overall spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is seen in the way in which they react to each other and take care of the environment.

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	2
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attainment ¹	*
The quality of pupils' learning and their progress	2
The quality of learning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress	2
The extent to which pupils feel safe	2
Pupils' behaviour	2

¹ The grades for attainment and attendance are: 1 is high; 2 is above average; 3 is broadly average; and 4 is low.

* In some special schools inspectors do not make a judgement about attainment in relation to expectations of the pupils' age.

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The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community	2
The extent to which pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	2
Taking into account: Pupils' attendance ¹	3
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2

How effective is the provision?

In most lessons ICT is used well to support learning and involve students in making choices. Teachers use assessment information well to inform students of their targets. This was an area for improvement from the previous inspection. As a result, students' progress is consistently good in most areas of the curriculum. Planning of lessons is conscientious and attention is given to ensuring that work is modified to meet the different needs of students in the class. However, in a small minority of classrooms the pace of the lesson is too slow. This reduces learning time. Support staff are well deployed in lessons and work closely and effectively with teachers to support the needs of all students.

The curriculum is well organised and is imaginatively enhanced by many visits and activities away from the classroom. Residential visits to a variety of locations help develop students' independence. For example, a recent visit enabled students to experience different outdoor pursuits and was described by one student as 'the most exciting place I have ever been to'. The level of academic accreditation offered to students is good, as are the quality of work experience placements. However, there are too few opportunities for students to gain vocational accreditation. School leaders plan to address this in the future.

As a result of outstanding care, guidance and support, students feel there is always someone who will listen and help. One student expressed this well by saying, 'I feel really safe here – we all help each other.' A careful and thorough assessment is undertaken when students arrive at the school, which is then used to target support effectively. Students whose circumstances make them vulnerable are exceptionally well supported and this is helped by the excellent links with many outside agencies. Attendance has been low in the past. It is currently rising due to strong links with the East Cheshire education welfare service. However, due in part to the recent reorganisation of the former Cheshire local authority, nine of the 44 students currently attending come from other authorities. Links with services in these other authorities are not as strong and, as a result, students' attendance is not as well supported. Transition arrangements are securely in place and are well supported by strong links with Connexions advisers.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

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The quality of teaching	2
Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	2
The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships	3
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	1

How effective are leadership and management?

The insightful and visionary leadership of the headteacher and senior leaders is moving the school forward and ensuring good outcomes for students. This, coupled with excellent partnerships forged with outside agencies, is driving improvement further. The school's excellent governing body has implemented strong procedures to ensure the health and well-being of all students. The Chair and other members offer outstanding support to the school and challenge to senior leaders. Policies and procedures ensure that all government safeguarding requirements are met and that practice is of a good standard. Leaders and managers have ensured that the school is a highly inclusive community. Equality of opportunity and the tackling of discrimination within school are good. The school has built successful and highly innovative links with the local community. These include an onsite community centre. Links with the global community are well developed and, as a result, students' understanding of life in a multi-ethnic society is well developed.

The school makes great efforts to engage all parents and carers. The work of school staff ensures that they are kept well informed about their children's successes. Daily diary links with home are in place and, as a result, parents and carers appreciate the ongoing work of the school. Excellent partnerships with a wide variety of agencies contribute significantly to students' well-being and progress. The school ensures good outcomes for students, many of whom have significant needs. It does this on a well-controlled budget and provides good value for money.

These are the grades for leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	2
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	2
The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met	1
The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers	2
The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being	1
The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	2

Inspection grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory, and 4 is inadequate

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The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	2
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	2

Views of parents and carers

Of the parents and carers who completed the 17 returned questionnaires, 80% agreed or strongly agreed that the school met the needs of their children well. Many made positive comments about the strength of support given to them and their children. A small minority raised concerns over the distance their children travelled in order to reach the school.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at St John's Wood Community School to complete a questionnaire about their views of the school.

In the questionnaire, parents and carers were asked to record how strongly they agreed with 13 statements about the school.

The inspector received 17 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 44 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	9	53	6	35	2	12	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	15	88	1	6	1	6	0	0
The school informs me about my child's progress	13	76	4	24	0	0	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	10	59	5	29	2	12	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	12	71	5	29	0	0	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	12	71	4	24	1	6	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	10	59	7	41	0	0	0	0
The school makes sure that my child is well prepared for the future (for example changing year group, changing school, and for children who are finishing school, entering further or higher education, or entering employment)	9	53	5	29	3	18	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	11	65	4	24	2	12	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	14	82	3	18	0	0	0	0
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	11	65	5	29	1	6	0	0
The school is led and managed effectively	13	76	4	24	0	0	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	14	82	3	18	0	0	0	0

The table above summarises the responses that parents and carers made to each statement. The percentages indicate the proportion of parents and carers giving that response out of the total number of completed questionnaires. Where one or more parents and carers chose not to answer a particular question, the percentages will not add up to 100%.

Glossary

What inspection judgements mean

Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	These features are highly effective. An outstanding school provides exceptionally well for its pupils' needs.
Grade 2	Good	These are very positive features of a school. A school that is good is serving its pupils well.
Grade 3	Satisfactory	These features are of reasonable quality. A satisfactory school is providing adequately for its pupils.
Grade 4	Inadequate	These features are not of an acceptable standard. An inadequate school needs to make significant improvement in order to meet the needs of its pupils. Ofsted inspectors will make further visits until it improves.

Overall effectiveness of schools

	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
Type of school	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Nursery schools	51	45	0	4
Primary schools	6	41	42	10
Secondary schools	8	34	44	14
Sixth forms	10	37	50	3
Special schools	32	38	25	5
Pupil referral units	12	43	31	14
All schools	9	40	40	10

New school inspection arrangements were introduced on 1 September 2009. This means that inspectors now make some additional judgements that were not made previously.

The data in the table above is for the period 1 September to 31 December 2009 and is the most recently published data available (see www.ofsted.gov.uk). Please note that the sample of schools inspected during the autumn term 2009 was not representative of all schools nationally, as weaker schools are inspected more frequently than good or outstanding schools.

Percentages are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100. Secondary school figures include those that have sixth forms, and sixth form figures include only the data specifically for sixth form inspection judgements.

Common terminology used by inspectors

Achievement:	the progress and success of a pupil in their learning, development or training.
Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
Capacity to improve:	the proven ability of the school to continue improving. Inspectors base this judgement on what the school has accomplished so far and on the quality of its systems to maintain improvement.
Leadership and management:	the contribution of all the staff with responsibilities, not just the headteacher, to identifying priorities, directing and motivating staff and running the school.
Learning:	how well pupils acquire knowledge, develop their understanding, learn and practise skills and are developing their competence as learners.
Overall effectiveness:	<p>inspectors form a judgement on a school's overall effectiveness based on the findings from their inspection of the school. The following judgements, in particular, influence what the overall effectiveness judgement will be.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ The school's capacity for sustained improvement. ■ Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils. ■ The quality of teaching. ■ The extent to which the curriculum meets pupil's needs, including where relevant, through partnerships. ■ The effectiveness of care, guidance and support.
Progress:	the rate at which pupils are learning in lessons and over longer periods of time. It is often measured by comparing the pupils' attainment at the end of a key stage with their attainment when they started.

This letter is provided for the school, parents and carers to share with their children. It describes Ofsted's main findings from the inspection of their school.



30 April 2010

Dear Students

Inspection of St John's Wood Community School, Knutsford, WA16 8PA

Thank you very much for making me so welcome when I visited your school. It was lovely to meet you all and to hear how much you enjoy coming to school. I send a special thank you to those of you who gave up your time to talk to me. I agree with those of you who told me that you think school is good. These are the things I liked the most:

- the friendly welcome everyone in school gives to visitors
- the excellent way in which staff care for you and help you to make future choices
- the way in which you all work hard and achieve a good range of qualifications
- the way in which you help each other and the local community.

In order to make your school even better we have asked your teachers to ensure that:

- you all work even harder in mathematics so that more of you achieve your targets
- you have a good choice of vocational options in Key Stage 4 so that all of you leave school with as many qualifications as possible
- all of you are supported sufficiently well and attend as frequently as possible.

Best wishes to you all.

Yours sincerely

Mrs Marian Thomas

Lead inspector

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