

Inspection of a good school: John Watson School

Littleworth Road, Wheatley, Oxford, Oxfordshire OX33 1NN

Inspection dates: 18 and 19 October 2022

Outcome

John Watson School continues to be a good school.

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils thrive in the school's safe and nurturing environment. They want to do well and work hard. Clear routines contribute well to the school's calm and orderly atmosphere. Pupils arrive happily for the start of the school day and are soon settled into their classrooms. Activities in the youngest classes, such as the morning's 'hello' song, are helping the youngest children to settle into school.

The school's values: safety, learning, independence, communication and engagement (SLICE), underpin school life. Adults take good care of pupils, respect their views and listen carefully to what they have to say. Pupils feel secure and valued, and grow in confidence as a result. They usually behave well, although anxieties and frustrations make it hard for some to behave well all the time. Staff have high expectations of pupils. They develop strong relationships with their pupils and know precisely when to ask more of them. Leaders take any concerns about bullying seriously and act promptly.

Pupils are interested in visitors. They speak about their school and their learning enthusiastically and have a clear sense of their own progress over time. Inspectors were often greeted warmly and politely, with a smile and a shake of the hand.

What does the school do well and what does it need to do better?

Leaders have improved the school's curriculum in the past two years. They have introduced greater clarity about what pupils need to learn in each subject, and more ambition for pupils' academic achievement. Pupils follow well-designed 'curriculum pathways' which support their learning well across a wide range of subjects.

Staff know their pupils very well. They use lots of praise and reassurance in lessons to motivate their pupils. Teachers plan activities carefully to capture pupils' interest. They adapt what they are teaching skilfully to support pupils' needs. Teachers and leaders use ongoing assessments to review pupils' progress and to set future targets. Pupils work

carefully in their books and are rightly proud of their achievements. They told inspectors how much they like school.

Leaders prioritise the development of pupils' communication skills. They work closely with specialists, such as speech and language therapists, to provide effective support. Pupils often make significant progress in their ability to communicate and interact with others. All learn to use strategies and techniques, such as sign language and symbols, to express their views, and do so with increasing confidence. During the inspection, for example, one of the youngest children used sign language to successfully request help with his lunch.

The school's well-established approach to teaching reading works well. The progress made by pupils in reading makes a strong contribution to future adulthood and independence, as well as to their learning in other subjects. Staff are knowledgeable about how to teach early reading skills, including phonics. They use a wide range of strategies and resources, such as songs and technology, to support pupils' reading. Pupils read daily. They learn how to use phonics knowledge with increasing success to help them to read. Many read very well and enjoy books. Staff use questioning well to check and explore pupils' understanding of their reading.

Pupils learn how to recognise and manage their own feelings, and how to put things right if they make a mistake. Most pupils behave well. Sometimes, however, they behave less well than they should during lessons. Adults provide patient, caring and sensitive support when this is the case. They usually manage pupils' behaviour effectively but are sometimes not as clear as they could be about the school's behaviour management policy. Break times are positive and sociable times. Pupils make full use of the school's good-quality resources, such as trikes and games, or chat happily with staff and friends.

The school's work to promote pupils' independence is a strength of the school. Pupils are encouraged to make choices throughout the school day. The teaching of key skills, such as how to follow a recipe and how to use a bus timetable, help to prepare pupils for future adulthood. They are encouraged to complete self-care tasks, such as using the toilet, as independently as possible. Safety issues are taught successfully through the school's curriculum. This ensures that pupils are clear about what to do if they are worried. They told inspectors, for instance, that they would tell an adult if they saw something on the internet which upset them, and spoke of the importance of working safely when cooking. The school prepares pupils in the sixth form effectively for education and employment.

Leaders have revised the school's personal, social, and health education (PSHE) and relationships and sex education (RSE) programmes in recent months. The updated programmes provide a coherently planned sequence of learning which is carefully tailored to the school's context. However, the programmes are new, and not yet implemented fully.

Staff report strong teamwork and high staff morale. One said, 'Everyone pulls together', while another said, 'The atmosphere is really good'. Staff feel that leaders are supportive and considerate of their well-being. Parents are pleased with the progress their children

are making. One described the school as 'life-changing', while another said, 'My son is happy and thriving. He loves learning and is nurtured and safe'.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders ensure a strong focus on pupils' safety. They use regular training and updates well to inform staff about safety matters. Staff are knowledgeable about safeguarding policies and procedures as a result. They are confident about what to do if they are worried about a pupil's safety, and report concerns promptly. Leaders work closely with agencies such as children's services and the local authority designated officer. They make sure that safe recruitment procedures are followed consistently and complete suitability checks in a timely manner. Leaders ensure that pupils are properly supervised throughout the school day.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Leaders have not ensured that all staff are clear about the school's behaviour management policies and procedures. This means that pupils' behaviour is not always managed as well as it could be. Leaders should make sure that all staff are knowledgeable about the school's behaviour management procedures and follow these consistently well.
- The recently revised PSHE and RSE programmes are at an early stage of implementation. Pupils do not learn as fully as they should in these subjects as a result. Leaders should make sure that these programmes are delivered effectively, and securely established in the school's curriculum.

Background

When we have judged a school to be good, we will then normally go into the school about once every four years to confirm that the school remains good/outstanding]. This is called an ungraded inspection and it is carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. We do not give graded judgements on an ungraded inspection. However, if we find evidence that a school would now receive a higher or lower grade, then the next inspection will be a graded inspection, which is carried out under section 5 of the Act. Usually this is within one to two years of the date of the ungraded inspection. If we have serious concerns about safeguarding, behaviour or the quality of education, we will deem the ungraded inspection a graded inspection immediately.

This is the first ungraded inspection since we judged the school to be good in May 2016.

How can I feed back my views?

You can use [Ofsted Parent View](#) to give Ofsted your opinion on your child's school, or to find out what other parents and carers think. We use information from Ofsted Parent View when deciding which schools to inspect, when to inspect them and as part of their inspection.

The Department for Education has further [guidance](#) on how to complain about a school.

Further information

You can search for [published performance information](#) about the school.

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.

School details

Unique reference number	123333
Local authority	Oxfordshire
Inspection number	10203120
Type of school	Special
School category	Community special
Age range of pupils	2 to 19
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in sixth-form provision	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	111
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	12
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governing body	Lynn Wong
Headteacher	Stephen Passey
Website	www.johnwatsonschool.org
Date of previous inspection	24 and 25 May 2016, under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- All pupils have an education, health and care plan relating to a range of special educational needs and/or disabilities, including severe learning difficulties, profound and multiple learning difficulties, moderate learning difficulties, speech, language and communication needs, and autistic spectrum disorders.
- There were no children in the nursery at the time of the inspection.
- The school does not use alternative provision.

Information about this inspection

- This was the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. Inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with leaders and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.

- Inspectors met with the headteacher, the deputy headteachers, the business manager, and middle leaders. They also spoke with a range of staff at different times during the inspection.
- The lead inspector met with two governors and had a telephone conversation with the chair of governors.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: reading, mathematics and communication and interaction. Deep dives included visiting a range of lessons, looking at pupils' work, and talking with leaders, teachers and pupils about how teaching builds pupils' knowledge over time in these subjects.
- Inspectors spoke with pupils in lessons, during break times, and at other times during the school day.
- The views of staff and parents were gathered through a range of sources, including Ofsted's surveys and informal discussions.
- Inspectors assessed the school's culture of safeguarding throughout the inspection. Inspectors checked the single central record and reviewed a wide range of safeguarding documents and records.

Inspection team

Julie Sackett, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

Shaun Jarvis

His Majesty's Inspector

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