

County school 'failing pupils'

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WHEATLEY Park School has been put into special measures after inspectors uncovered failings.

Ofsted inspectors said the school was failing to give an acceptable standard of education and in their report singled out disruptive behaviour by pupils and a failure to "safeguard" children.

The school's governing body was also criticised for failing to tackle weaknesses.

The sanction means the school will now have to draw up an action plan to tackle the issues raised and be subject to regular spot checks

by inspectors. If it fails to turn its performance around, it could ultimately be closed.

The school, in Holton, which has 1,170 pupils, is the only secondary school in special measures. St Christopher's Primary School, in Cowley, is the only other county school in special measures.

In a letter to parents, Wheatley Park head Kate Curtis said: "Ofsted has given us some positive and encouraging feedback, as well as some tough messages. We will act on these with confidence and determination."

When the school was last inspected, in 2007, it was given a satisfactory rating.

Oxfordshire County Council spokesman Paul Smith said: "The council

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will work very closely with Wheatley Park School to tackle the issues raised by Ofsted. The school was inspected very shortly after Ofsted's new and toughened regime of inspection came into force.

"The headteacher has already addressed several of the issues raised in the report and she is determined to tackle the rest in time for future inspections."

Inspector Cathie Munt said: "At the last inspection the school was asked to

make improvements to the rate of progress made by pupils. The leaders of the school have not managed to achieve this.

"Poor behaviour in some lessons, especially in low-attaining groups, is not managed well enough, resulting in disruptions to students' learning."

Gawain Little, president of the Oxfordshire branch of the National Union of Teachers, said staff at the school were "doing their best" to support the children they teach.

He said: "We are at the very early stages of the implementation of the Ofsted framework. We would question whether the most effective way to develop school improvement is what seems like quite a punitive measure."