

# Woodfield School

## Inspection report

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	117682
<b>Local Authority</b>	Hertfordshire
<b>Inspection number</b>	358174
<b>Inspection dates</b>	7–8 October 2010
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	Sheila Nolan

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

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<b>Type of school</b>	Special
<b>School category</b>	Community special
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	3–19
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
Gender of pupils in the sixth form	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	61
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	20
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Kate Worden
<b>Headteacher</b>	Rosemary Freestone
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	30 January 2008
<b>School address</b>	Malmes Croft Hemel Hempstead HP3 8RL
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## Introduction

This inspection was carried out by two additional inspectors, who visited 11 lessons taught by nine teachers and also observed teaching assistants at work. They held meetings with groups of students, governors and staff. They observed the school's work, and scrutinised the school's self-evaluation documents and safeguarding policies as well as information on students' progress. Inspectors also took account of the 21 questionnaires returned by parents, the 15 by children and the 33 by staff.

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

- Are expectations high enough for all groups of pupils, particularly for those in the Early Years Foundation Stage?
- To what extent has teaching developed since the last inspection so that tasks are well matched to pupils' next steps in learning?
- How well does the curriculum in the main school support the pupils' progress?

## Information about the school

Woodfield School, with specialist status for cognition and learning, provides for pupils with severe learning difficulties. Many have additional complex needs such as autistic spectrum disorders, epilepsy and other physical or multi-sensory impairment. All pupils have a statement of special educational needs and many need regular medical intervention. Pupils come mainly from the surrounding areas but a few travel significant distances to reach school. A number present challenging behaviour. The school's intake is fluid with pupils joining as need arises. Speech and language difficulties are common. Although the majority of pupils are of White British heritage, a steadily increasing number of pupils speak English as an additional language. The school continues to hold the Information and Communication Technology mark as well as Healthy School status.

Currently there are three children in the Early Years Foundation Stage, two in the Nursery and one in Reception. The school has places for 76 pupils, but at present has 15 vacancies. There has been a relatively high turnover of staff recently, including the retirement of the lead teacher in the sixth form. An after-school group is hosted by the school but managed by a charity.

**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

Woodfield is a good school that does well by its vulnerable pupils. Parents and carers confirm this view. One commented, echoing the views of others, 'The school makes my son feel very safe because the environment is calm, friendly and secure. He has progressed well due to the fantastic support from teachers and assistants.' Inspectors agree that pupils do feel exceptionally secure in Woodfield. The inclusive school ethos is promoted vigorously by the good leadership of the headteacher and senior team, who 'always have time for each and every pupil'. This is because the school promotes equality of opportunity exceptionally well for all groups of pupils, whatever their needs.

Other major strengths of the school are the ways in which the excellent curriculum and the outstanding care, guidance and support empower pupils to gain in independence and in managing their emotions and behaviour. Pupils at all levels make rapid progress in their personal development, but more so in the primary and post-16 phases. Progress is consolidated in the middle years, but sometimes slows because of medical needs and the rate of pupils' physical development. Pupils also make good progress from their low starting points in basic skills. Almost all students transfer to Years 12 to 14 at the end of mandatory schooling. By the time they leave, the majority have experienced dealing with money, buying essentials, cooking for themselves where possible, and travelling on public transport. They prepare well for their future training and education through work experience and college visits. The school's specialist status has helped provide post-16 students with an even wider range of off-site experiences that effectively help their transition to the adult world. Excellent partnerships with external agencies enable the school to find the best solutions for the pupils' needs.

The good quality of teaching and learning has been sustained since the previous inspection, despite staffing changes. For most groups of pupils, expectations are high but challenging tasks for the most-able pupils are not always planned well enough to take account of information on their performance that has been gleaned from previous lessons. This is partly because the day-to-day assessments of the pupils' tiny steps in learning are not always sharply focused by teaching and support staff. Although many parents and carers engage well with the school, a small number are particularly difficult to involve in their children's learning. The school has yet to find creative ways of bringing these families within the school community so that their children gain the best from their time at Woodfield.

The school has improved on many fronts since the last inspection. The provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage is now good and expectations of what the children can achieve are both realistic and challenging. The curriculum in the main school, particularly in the middle years, has improved to match that at Key Stage 4. Governance has also

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improved. Self-evaluation is broadly accurate, if over-generous at times. The school has clearly demonstrated its good capacity to continue to develop.

## What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Raise the quality of teaching further so that it is consistently at least good by July 2011 by:
  - ensuring that there is sufficient challenge for the most-able pupils
  - sharpening the procedures for recording pupils' tiny steps in learning throughout the day.
- Find creative ways to engage more closely with parents and carers so that those who are hard to reach can become involved in their children's education, such as;
  - using representatives from minority ethnic groups to build parental confidence in visiting the school
  - establishing projects in which they can be involved.

## Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

**2**

The quality of learning and progress in lessons and over time is good. Mostly, lesson activities are designed to ensure that pupils build well on previous learning, although the most able pupils are not always challenged enough. Pupils make excellent progress in their personal development. Pupils with physical and sensory disabilities make the fastest progress, largely because the rate of progress of pupils with autistic spectrum disorders and with other complex needs is often affected negatively by their medical conditions. The progress of those with little English on joining the school accelerates as they grow in confidence and is also good.

As a result of the calm and purposeful support from all adults, pupils are happy to come to school, attend regularly, feel very safe and learn to persevere with tasks. They benefit greatly from working in small groups and from well focused individual support. The use of a variety of new technologies and the Picture Exchange Communication System (PECS) supports pupils in communicating their needs and in making choices throughout the day, to maximise learning time. In a lesson aimed at developing independent information and communication technology skills, older pupils used previously learned clip art to make a birthday invitation poster. They successfully imported pictures and independently used different fonts and colours. Pupils are helped to prepare well for their next stage of training and education, especially through their shopping visits in the locality and through making items for sale during their mini enterprise week.

Pupils are regularly helped to develop their understanding of how to eat healthily, particularly with regard to specific dietary needs. They generally opt for physical activities at breaks and enjoy swimming greatly. The school's work in this area has been recognised by Healthy School status. Pupils take as active a role in the school as they can. Some post-16 students have laid pathways in the garden area, look after the greenhouse and grow vegetables which are used in the school kitchen. Others contribute well by encouraging their peers to stay calm and live up to the school's expectations with regard to behaviour, which is generally good. For many students, this good behaviour represents excellent progress. Pupils' spiritual, cultural, social and moral development is good. In an assembly,

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for example, they contributed well to the round-the-world quiz, respecting each other's wish to participate and allowing their peers space to think.

*These are the grades for pupils' outcomes*

<b>Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning</b>	<b>2</b>
Taking into account:	*
Pupils' attainment <sup>1</sup>	
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
<b>The extent to which pupils feel safe</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>Pupils' behaviour</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The extent to which pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being</b>	<b>2</b>
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attendance <sup>1</sup>	2
<b>The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development</b>	<b>2</b>

<sup>1</sup> 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.

## How effective is the provision?

The very good teamwork of adults in lessons and around the school underpins the good quality of teaching and the good learning of most pupils. Behaviour management is excellent and the relentless consistency with which processes are applied is at the heart of the pupils' fast progress in developing good behaviour patterns that allow learning to take place. Pupils really trust the adults around them and this gives them the confidence to take the next step. This was clearly demonstrated in a swimming session, where pupils engaged extremely well in movements to enhance their gross motor skills. Staff use a range of systems to assess pupils' progress, including photography and video evidence, but sometimes miss opportunities to record the minute steps in learning within lessons. Despite good planning and excellent resources, tasks, as a result, are not always challenging enough to allow the most-able pupils to make the very best progress.

The excellent curriculum is strongly focused on breaking down individual pupils' barriers to learning. Communication skills training and personal and social development are central to

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the school's work. At the same time, basic skills are promoted well. Pupils benefit greatly from the wide range of therapies and medical services that are well matched to their needs. They enjoy extensive enrichment activities, including an art week and sailing. Many of these activities, particularly the off-site visits for individuals to support life skills, have been made possible because of the school's specialist status.

The pupils' health and well-being are at the forefront of the school's endeavours. Pupils' smiling faces when they arrive each morning attest to the school's exceptional efforts to support them and their families. The outstanding care, guidance and support for the pupils are based on the very clear understanding that staff have of each pupil's needs. All staff treat them with great respect. The annual review process is very well managed, despite a few parents not taking part. Transitions to the next stages of training and education and induction procedures are extremely thorough as well as sensitive to particular individual difficulties. Risk assessments are carried out for each child and records of incidents are systematically recorded.

*These are the grades for the quality of provision*

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

## How effective are leadership and management?

All staff share the commitment of the headteacher and senior team, not only to do the best for the pupils currently in their care, but also to seek for continuing improvement. Leaders ensure that well-established monitoring of the school's work takes place regularly and effective training is provided for staff at all levels, particularly in relation to pupils' emerging needs. The effective governing body has a number of vacancies but ensures that all procedures are in place, particularly with regard to safeguarding. Governors are guided well by an able chair, and support the school successfully. They are growing in confidence to challenge the school if needed.

The school is an excellent ambassador for pupils in ensuring that all have an equal opportunity to develop as well as they can. Discrimination is tackled robustly. Procedures and systems for safeguarding are very secure. Excellent partnerships with external agencies, such as specialised therapists, contribute very effectively to the care, guidance and support of the pupils. The school strives hard to engage parents fully in the pupils' development. Many are extremely responsive to Woodfield's work but there is a hard-to-reach group of minority ethnic families who have little contact with school. The school strives to promote community cohesion well and, within its boundaries, relationships are very harmonious. While the school's work in this area is good, leaders recognise that the school is not yet fully successful in reaching out to some within its wider community or in forging international links.

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*These are the grades for leadership and management*

<b>The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement</b>	<b>2</b>
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	2
<b>The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money</b>	<b>2</b>

## Early Years Foundation Stage

At the heart of this good provision are the in-depth initial assessments to inform the individual programmes that manage the unique challenges facing each child. The transition book between home and school is used very well to engage parents fully in their children's development. The children make fast gains in their physical development and in their ability to relate to adults. They learn to make eye contact, use response machines where necessary and learn to play and make choices as to what they like doing. They enjoy the nursery rhymes, responding to the music, the soft and remote-controlled toys, and the outdoor equipment for those who can manage it. The excellent care, guidance and support ensure, among other aspects, that diets are carefully matched to children's individual medical needs. Teaching is good but there are missed opportunities to record the tiny steps in learning that children take, to supplement the other school records and reports.

*These are the grades for the Early Years Foundation Stage*

<b>Overall effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage</b>	<b>2</b>
Taking into account: Outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
The quality of provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
The effectiveness of leadership and management of the Early Years Foundation Stage	2



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## Sixth form

The excellent curriculum and care, guidance and support encourage students well in their striving for independence through the imaginative personal and social education programme. As well as making fast progress in the management of their behaviour and in learning life skills, students also make good progress in other basic skills, including communication and the use of information and communication technology. Work-related opportunities and college taster days prepare them well for the next stage of training, and all students go on to the best provision available for them. Students' personal development is excellent and some are able to support their peers when they become frustrated or over-excited. One student was able to proudly show his work in the garden and to make choices about when to harvest the marrows. Teaching is generally good although the pace in some lessons can be too slow, partly because equipment is not always ready at the start of a session. The day-to-day management of the post-16 provision is smooth and the sixth form is led well by senior school staff.

*These are the grades for the sixth form*

<b>Overall effectiveness of the sixth form</b>	<b>2</b>
Taking into account:	
Outcomes for students in the sixth form	2
The quality of provision in the sixth form	2
Leadership and management of the sixth form	2

## Views of parents and carers

All parents and carers who returned questionnaires were very positive about the school's work. They were especially pleased about the way that the school keeps pupils safe and how much their children enjoy coming to school. There were no negative comments.

## Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Woodfield 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 inspection team received 21 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 61 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	20	95	1	5	0	0	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	21	100	0	0	0	0	0	0
My school informs me about my child's progress	19	90	2	10	0	0	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	9	43	11	52	0	0	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	16	76	5	24	0	0	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	17	81	3	14	0	0	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	14	67	7	33	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)	13	62	6	29	0	0	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	13	62	8	38	0	0	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	15	71	5	24	0	0	0	0
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	17	81	4	19	0	0	0	0
The school is led and managed effectively	17	81	4	19	0	0	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	20	95	1	5	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 all 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

Type of school	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Nursery schools	58	36	4	2
Primary schools	8	43	40	9
Secondary schools	10	35	42	13
Sixth forms	13	39	45	3
Special schools	33	42	20	4
Pupil referral units	18	40	29	12
All schools	11	42	38	9

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 are for the period 1 September 2009 to 31 March 2010 and are the most recently published data available (see [www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk)). Please note that the sample of schools inspected during the autumn and spring terms 2009/10 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"><li>■ The school's capacity for sustained improvement.</li><li>■ Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils.</li><li>■ The quality of teaching.</li><li>■ The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships.</li><li>■ The effectiveness of care, guidance and support.</li></ul>
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.**



11 October 2010

Dear Pupils and Students

**Inspection of Woodfield School, Hemel Hempstead, HP3 8RL**

Thank you for having us when we visited your good school recently, and for telling us your views. We are very pleased that this was OK!

We were happy to see that you are learning to behave so well and that you try to respect each other.

The adults look after you very well and keep you safe. You get lots of good support in lessons.

There are lots of exciting things for you to learn and do. You like swimming very much.

To make your school even better, we have asked your teachers and helpers to encourage those of you who learn quickly to do even more than you already can. We would also like them to note more carefully the things that you learn in lessons.

We think, too, that some of your families could come to the school more often to see how you are doing.

We hope you will continue to enjoy your time at Woodfield and that you will work hard with the adults to keep the school a happy place.

Yours sincerely

Sheila Nolan

Lead inspector

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