

Woodlands School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	125469
Local Authority	Surrey
Inspection number	359896
Inspection dates	19–20 October 2010
Reporting inspector	Kay (Kathleen) Charlton

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	2–19
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in the sixth form	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	71
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	12
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Stephen Wood
Headteacher	Jane Sigger
Date of previous school inspection	13 February 2008
School address	Fortyfoot Road Leatherhead KT22 8RY
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by two additional inspectors. Fifteen lessons were observed covering all teachers. Meetings were held with pupils, staff, governors, and the school's associate headteacher. The inspectors observed the school's work, and scrutinised a range of documentation including the school improvement plan, teachers' planning, assessment information, annual review documentation, the school's own monitoring and 24 parents' and carers' questionnaires.

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

- How well do teachers challenge all pupils in the light of the increasing complexity of pupils' needs?
- Is the school successfully encouraging pupils' personal development?
- How well does the curriculum meet pupils' needs given the present accommodation?
- How well school leaders, particularly the interim senior leadership team and the recently established faculty leaders, are driving school improvement?

Information about the school

Woodlands School caters for pupils with a wide range of special educational needs and/or disabilities. These most often link to severe or profound and multiple learning difficulties. All pupils have a statement of special educational needs. The complexity of pupils' needs has increased over time. A significant proportion of pupils, including those with complex medical needs, require highly specialist support.

The vast majority of pupils are from White British backgrounds, although a few come from diverse ethnic backgrounds. A few pupils are at the early stages of speaking English as an additional language. There are currently six children in the Early Years Foundation Stage class. In this class, learners undergo formal assessment and, as a result, some move to other schools at the end of the key stage. At the age of 16, a few join the sixth form. The sixth form is situated on the campus of a nearby secondary school. The school currently has an acting headteacher and an acting deputy headteacher. In anticipation of the school's move from a two- to a three-site school, in November 2011, a new leadership structure has recently been introduced with three faculty leaders to ensure continuity of the curriculum across all three sites.

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

Woodlands is a good school. Aspects of pupils' personal development, the care, guidance and support pupils receive, and the sixth form provision are outstanding. Extremely strong links with others, including health professionals and other agencies, enhance the quality of care and outcomes for pupils of all ages.

Good teaching engages pupils and very supportive relationships give them the confidence to try hard. As a result, pupils including those with the greatest needs, learn effectively, make good progress and achieve well. Students in the sixth form make outstanding progress.

In a large majority of lessons the expectations of staff are high and, in a range of ways, they ensure the planned learning outcomes of the lesson and also pupils' individual targets are used effectively. As a result, pupils learn new things successfully, which helps them to achieve well overall. In a minority of lessons, however, staff do not fully challenge pupils of differing abilities in this way. This has been identified as a whole school improvement priority.

Pupils' personal development is the cornerstone of the curriculum. The high emphasis given to this aspect of education ensures that pupils' and students' understanding of the importance of a healthy lifestyle, their behaviour and their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development are outstanding. A very wide range of enrichment activities, including residential visits, add greatly to everyone's enjoyment of school.

The school works hard to overcome the lack of specialist facilities in the Key Stage 4 accommodation because this limits pupils' opportunities to learn. There are well-considered plans to improve this situation as part of the planned move to three sites. This move will also improve the space available for all age groups. The school has identified that, even though children make good progress in the Early Years Foundation Stage, outdoor learning is not well enough developed. Leaders are actively addressing this issue.

The interim leadership team has a good blend of skills and experience and, with the recently appointed faculty leaders, is successfully leading the school through a time of considerable change. Leaders show a strong determination to improve the provision. Good self-evaluation, especially through rigorous monitoring, has a positive effect on improving teaching and learning. The senior leadership team is very well supported by other staff and open to the challenge of the governing body. Senior leaders ensure staff are fully involved in the school's self-review process so that there is clarity about areas of strength and also what needs to be improved. Professional development of staff is well focused and fully supports school improvement. Since the last inspection, the school has greatly improved the quality of its assessments. As a result, targeted support is given to pupils to ensure that they make good progress. The school's track record, along with the very

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strong commitment from all to wanting the best for pupils, shows that the school has a good capacity to improve in the future.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Ensure that, in all lessons, staff fully challenge pupils of differing abilities by making highly effective use of individual targets and learning outcomes to help pupils make the best possible progress.
- Extend the opportunities for pupils to learn by implementing the planned improvements to the accommodation and by improving the outdoor activities for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

2

Those of different abilities, including pupils with severe or profound and multiple learning difficulties, make good progress and achieve well. This includes those who speak English as an additional language as teachers and assistants focus well on developing communication skills. Pupils arrive happily each morning; they greatly enjoy school and persevere in their learning. They show trust in staff and they feel safe and secure. In an outstanding literacy lesson, with a group of pupils with profound and multiple learning difficulties, pupils achieved exceptionally well. This is because of the focus given by staff to ensuring each one reached the planned learning outcomes as well as their individual targets. In this lesson, the ways in which staff engaged the pupils in understanding what they needed to do to be successful were very impressive. This high quality practice is not, however, evident in all lessons.

Pupils make noticeable gains in their self-esteem and independence. They make healthy choices and take part very enthusiastically in the high quality physical education programme as recognised by the Healthy School, Sportsmark and Activemark awards. Pupils communicate their feelings very effectively and respond exceptionally well to moments of reflection, for example when learning about Buddhism. They are very supportive of each other and respect other's differences. All make a good contribution to the community and share their views, although the school is rightly looking at extending the ways in which pupils can take part in decision making. Many pupils attend well, but the overall rate of attendance is affected by pupils' medical needs. Pupils develop the skills for their future economic well-being effectively. There is some very high quality work in the sixth form.

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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	1
The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles	1
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:	3
Pupils' attendance ¹	
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1

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.

How effective is the provision?

Teachers and support staff work well as teams with routines clearly established. They use resources, including information and communication technology, and signs and symbols very effectively to motivate pupils and ensure a positive response. In lessons, relationships are very good and staff manage pupils' behaviour extremely effectively. Most staff make sure that they skilfully plan learning using pupils' individual targets as well as the overall aim of the lesson. Often, they give the young people very helpful ongoing reminders about their targets and what they are learning about, although this practice is not sufficiently consistent.

The curriculum effectively meets the diverse needs of pupils, for example by planning activities and support for those identified as having very specialist needs as well as for the more able. It encourages pupils' communication and skills in reading very effectively across a range of subjects. Enrichment is very strong. In particular, the range of clubs, the many visits out of school and meetings with visitors to the school make a valuable contribution to the provision.

Across the school a very high standard of care, guidance and support is given to pupils. Staff work continuously to develop pupils' self-esteem, help them stay healthy and improve their behaviour. Links with others agencies, including health professionals and

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career advisers, are excellent and ensure a seamless approach for individual pupils. Vulnerable pupils are very carefully monitored and significant support is put in place if required. Pupils are given a great deal of help when joining or when leaving the school so that there is a smooth and happy transition. Good links with parents and carers ensure that they are fully involved in reviewing their children's progress.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

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	2
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	1

How effective are leadership and management?

The interim leadership team and faculty leaders show clear vision and are focused well on moving the school forward. Thoughtful plans for improvement, based on realistic judgements of strengths and weaknesses, are leading to clear improvements. Leaders are ambitious to develop the curriculum, resources and accommodation to enhance learning.

Safeguarding policies and procedures are thorough. Risk assessments are carefully thought through and staff are vigilant. The school is successful in promoting equal opportunities and tackling discrimination. Through the improved tracking of pupil progress the school is able to identify any pupil who is not doing their best and every effort is made to resolve the issue so that they get back on track.

Leaders have undertaken a very thorough analysis of the school's religious, ethnic and socio-economic context and this is aiding community cohesion well. Work undertaken with different ethnic groups, from outside the school's immediate area, has a particularly positive impact on pupils' understanding of the lives of others. The school's strong commitment to community cohesion ensures that pupils and students from different backgrounds get on very well together.

The governing body receives good quality information about the school's work as a result of the improved monitoring and self-evaluation and provides a good level of strategic management. It has a good range of skills with which to challenge the school and is in the process of extending the ways in which it surveys parents' and carers' views so that it can ensure communications improve further. As part of this, the school has started work towards the Leading Parent Partnership award.

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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	2
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
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

Early Years Foundation Stage

The provision is well thought through to match children's needs and, as a result, children make good progress, particularly in the development of their communication skills. As seen in a story telling session, good use of resources and well focused questioning ensured that more able children were successful in using simple signs and single words whilst others began to vocalise or, with support, to use switches to communicate. Staff work well as a team. They carefully assess the children's progress and use the assessments to realign their planning to improve the children's learning. Adult-directed activities are structured well and adults follow children's interests so that good learning results. The indoor area is spacious and well equipped and used to good effect, but outdoor learning is underdeveloped.

Leadership is good. The provision is monitored carefully and staff are clear about the changes needed to ensure improvement. The way that children are cared for is second to none with excellent support from outside agencies, particularly health professionals. The links with parents are strong and ensure that children settle into school very well.

These are the grades for the Early Years Foundation Stage

Overall effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
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	2

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Stage

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Sixth form

Excellent leadership, that has a high level of insight into post-16 education nationally, ensures that the provision takes advantage of the flexibility available for students of this age and is highly effective. It ensures that, through personalised learning plans which are very carefully tailored to individual needs and aspirations, students of differing abilities make excellent progress. The sixth form prepares students very well for life after school, particularly by helping them gain the confidence needed when meeting new people and going to different places. All students gain a good range of accreditation and almost all gain a college place once they leave.

The curriculum and teaching are highly effective in equipping students with the skills they need in their daily lives and in the wider world. By using a very wide range of links and venues as well as the school base students' eyes are opened to the range of options available to them. Excellent examples of this are the use of college courses and very carefully planned work-related opportunities, such as those at a nearby farm and with a community media and dance group. Local schools work extremely well in partnership with the school. Recently, some students worked with seven other Surrey schools and brought together a presentation that was so effective that it secured funding for a joint school boating project. Students develop their ability to make informed choices about a range of topics and are given excellent guidance about their career options. The Investors in Careers award affirms the quality of this work. The annual ski trip abroad provides excellent opportunities for students to practise the independent living skills they learn in school and also shows the high levels of care provided for students.

These are the grades for the sixth form

Overall effectiveness of the sixth form	1
Taking into account:	
Outcomes for students in the sixth form	1
The quality of provision in the sixth form	1
Leadership and management of the sixth form	1

Views of parents and carers

About a third of questionnaires were returned from parents and carers. They indicate that the vast majority of parents and carers are happy with the provision. They are keen to point out that pupils enjoy school. Their views are exemplified by the comments such as, 'My child's needs are very well supported,' and, 'The things my child has achieved are amazing.' Inspection findings endorse parents' and carers' positive views about the school. A few parents and carers expressed concerns about the interim leadership arrangements and communications with themselves. The report answers these queries, noting good leadership, although the school is actively looking into ways to improve communications further. All parents and carers indicate that they feel that their child is safe in school,

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although a few mentioned issues of overcrowding in the present accommodation. The inspection has a key recommendation in the report related to accommodation.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Woodlands 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 24 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 69 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	18	75	6	25	0	0	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	15	63	9	38	0	0	0	0
My school informs me about my child's progress	12	50	12	50	0	0	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	10	42	12	50	1	4	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	12	50	11	46	0	0	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	8	33	14	58	0	0	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	10	42	12	50	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)	10	42	9	38	0	0	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	10	42	11	46	1	4	1	4
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	10	42	10	42	0	0	0	0
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	13	54	8	33	1	4	1	4
The school is led and managed effectively	8	33	10	42	2	8	1	4
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	16	67	6	25	2	8	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). 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">■ 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 pupils' 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.



21 October 2010

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Woodlands School, Leatherhead KT22 8RY

Thank you for making us so welcome when we inspected your school. Woodlands School gives you a good education where you do well because of the good teaching. We could see that you are gaining confidence and learning in many ways. Those of you in the sixth form achieve exceptionally well because of your individual timetables and all the work you do outside school. By the time you leave you get a range of qualifications. The staff have high expectations of you and we could see that you try hard and behave very well indeed; please keep this up. All staff work extremely hard to make sure you are safe and outstandingly well cared for. You are given a very interesting range of things to do, such as helping to look after the animals on a farm.

The staff are keen to develop the school even further. We have asked them to use as many ways as possible to make sure that you always understand the aims of the lesson and also your learning targets, so that all of you can achieve your very best. Also, we have asked the school to make sure the planned improvements to the buildings take place, particularly to improve the learning for those of you in Key Stage 4, and that outdoor learning is improved for those of you in Badgers class.

Yours sincerely

Kay Charlton

Lead inspector

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