

Woodlands School

The Woodlands Centre, Tilley Green, Shrewsbury, SY4 5PJ

Inspection dates 12–13 June 2013

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Satisfactory	3
	This inspection:	Requires improvement	3
Achievement of pupils		Requires improvement	3
Quality of teaching		Requires improvement	3
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Requires improvement	3
Leadership and management		Requires improvement	3

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a school that requires improvement. It is not good because

- Not enough teaching is good and students do not always make the progress they are capable of, particularly in English. They do not have enough opportunities to develop their basic literacy skills in English or in other subjects.
- Teachers do not always give students work that is at the right level of difficulty. Students do not know how well they are doing in English.
- Although the school is improving, new developments have not been in place for long enough to have taken full effect. Subject leaders do not contribute as much as they could to school improvement.
- Leaders do not compare the progress their students make with national information. Teachers have targets to improve their work but they are not measurable. Leaders do not use all evidence available to judge the quality of teaching accurately.
- The governing body does not always challenge the leadership team effectively in order to improve pupils' achievement and behaviour still further.
- In a small minority of lessons, some students disrupt the learning of others. This is the result of weaker teaching and inconsistencies in how staff manage behaviour.

The school has the following strengths

- Relationships are strong and students appreciate the support they receive. They say that they feel safe.
- All students leave school with a qualification and all go on to employment, training or further education.
- More students are now making good progress in mathematics.
- Staff work hard and are committed to ensuring that students have the best experiences.
- Assessments are now more accurate when students start school. This has enabled leaders to identify and meet students' additional learning needs better. These students often make good or better progress.

Information about this inspection

- The inspector observed eight lessons or part-lessons taught by eight teachers, all of which were jointly observed with the headteacher.
- Meetings were held with students, members of the governing body, staff and two local authority link advisers.
- There were insufficient responses to the online (Parent View) survey. The inspector took into account the school's own recent parental survey, as well as 23 responses to the staff questionnaire.
- The inspector observed the school's work and examined a range of documents, including the school's own records of students' progress and attainment and monitoring documents. Other records relating to the performance management of staff and those relating to behaviour, safeguarding and attendance were also scrutinised.

Inspection team

Mary Hinds, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- Woodlands School caters for students with behavioural, emotional and social difficulties. All students have a statement of special educational needs and are referred by several different local authorities. Some students have additional needs, mainly specific learning difficulties.
- A well above average proportion of students, almost two thirds, are supported through the pupil premium, which is additional government funding. These students are all known to be eligible for free school meals; a small minority are also in the care of the local authority.
- Almost all students are of White British heritage.
- There are no students currently who spend part of their time learning at places away from the school.
- The school provides outreach work for the local authority, supporting mainstream schools in managing pupils with behavioural, emotional and social difficulties, including those with autistic spectrum disorders.
- The school has the Investors in Careers award.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of teaching and speed up rates of progress, especially in English, by:
 - providing more planned opportunities for students to develop and practise their skills in speaking and listening, reading and writing in English and all other subjects
 - improving the quality of target setting and marking in English so that students are given regular and clear feedback on how well they are doing and what they need to do to improve
 - making sure that work is better matched to the needs and abilities of all students so that they make the progress they are capable of
 - providing more practical activities to engage students more in their learning as well as further opportunities for students to work on their own
 - making the most of the outstanding practice observed in some teaching to help less effective teachers improve their practice
 - ensuring that leaders use all available evidence to make an accurate judgement on the quality of teaching.
- Improve behaviour by making sure that all staff put the behaviour policy consistently into practice and providing more opportunities for students to regularly review their own behaviour.
- Strengthen leadership by:
 - ensuring subject leaders take responsibility for the quality of teaching and the progress students make in their subjects
 - making sure the targets to improve teachers' performance are linked to measurable increases in students' progress
 - using data more effectively in order to set challenging targets by comparing students' progress with that of all students nationally.
- An external review of governance should be undertaken in order to assess how this aspect of leadership and management may be improved.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils

requires improvement

- Too few students are making good progress from their individual starting points, particularly in English, although recently, more students have begun to make better progress in mathematics
- Students start school with levels of attainment that are well below average. Many have significant gaps in their learning as a result of poor attendance and lack of engagement in their learning prior to their admission to the school.
- Some students' have poor literacy skills which can have a considerable impact on their progress in English and in other subjects because it prevents them participating fully in activities. As a result, this sometimes stops them from making good or better progress.
- Since the start of the school year, there has been an intense focus on using pupil premium funding more effectively to re-engage students and their parents and carers in their learning. This sample group of students receives intense mentoring and their views, as well as those of their parents, are gathered through regular surveys.
- This is beginning to have a positive impact on students' progress and leading to better parental engagement. However, these initiatives have yet to have a full effect on all students. Currently, attainment in English and mathematics for those students eligible for additional funding is the same as that of their classmates.
- Students with additional learning needs often make good progress because they are quickly identified and thoroughly assessed when they join the school. They have intense individualised programmes to support their learning, planned carefully by the special educational needs co-ordinator.
- Students make good progress in mathematics. This is because teaching takes into consideration their needs and interests. Students are able to see a purpose in their learning and enjoy solving problems while, at the same time, practising key mathematical skills.
- Students are encouraged to read regularly and for pleasure. One student read an excerpt from 'Of Mice and Men' fluently to the inspector. He was able to explain clearly what he had read and also talked expressively about his favourite author. Although many students have good reading and communication skills, others lack confidence to talk and share their thoughts and ideas with adults or with one another.
- The Key Stage 4 programme of work starts in Years 9 or 10, depending on a student's individual need. There are clear routes and opportunities for pupils to achieve nationally recognised accreditations at GCSE, BTEC and in functional skills. This year, all Year 10 students had highly successful work experience placements. By the end of Key Stage 4, all students leave school with at least one form of accreditation or qualification. The Investor in Careers programme has successfully encouraged students to make responsible choices about their careers.

The quality of teaching

requires improvement

- Teaching is not consistently good or better. As a consequence, students have not achieved as well as they should over time in the school.
- Teachers do not always plan well enough to meet the different levels of ability in their class. This means that students often complete the same tasks. Sometimes, more-able students finish the task quickly and then have to wait for their classmates to catch up. Work is sometimes too hard for less-able students and they rely too much on adult support. This reduces their chances to work independently. As a result, students lose interest and, at times, become either passive or disruptive.
- Although staff are good at using their assessments in mathematics to inform students how well they are doing and set targets for what they need to do to improve, there is no systematic process for this in English.
- Sometimes, teachers read out instructions and talk too much which restricts students' chances to develop key literacy skills. There are not enough specifically planned activities to develop these skills in English and in other subjects.
- Mathematics is taught effectively. The specialist teacher has good subject knowledge and provides activities that are relevant and interesting. Students' learning is supported well through good questioning and a learning environment that provides clear prompts for specific mathematical ideas.
- Information and communication technology (ICT) is used well. It provides activities that are well suited to individual needs, especially for those students who have specific learning difficulties. They are able to work at their own pace on practical tasks.
- Where teaching is better, teachers' carefully plan practical activities and identify opportunities for students to read aloud when the chance arises. In these lessons, students are encouraged to discuss their thoughts and ideas with each other.
- In a lesson in personal, social and health education, students discussed their possible career choices with great enthusiasm. The teaching assistant sensitively encouraged one student successfully to re-engage with his learning and stepped back when the student was confident to work independently. This outstanding practice is not routinely shared across the school.

The behaviour and safety of pupils requires improvement

- Behaviour and safety are not good because some students' behaviour is not always managed effectively. Staff do not always apply the school's behaviour policy consistently. As a result, a small minority of lessons do not continue at a good pace because of low level disruption.
 - Relationships are strong and provide a supportive environment for students. When activities are well tailored to their needs, students have very positive attitudes to learning and are able to manage their own behaviour well. In these lessons, teachers instantly recognise and celebrate students' efforts and attitudes using the school's computerised reward system. They give students the opportunity to review and score their own behaviour, but this is not consistently put into practice in all lessons.
 - Students behave well as they move around the school. They greet each other, adults and visitors politely. They take pride in their school and its facilities. Several have helped to build beehives
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and many are looking forward to keeping bees in the very near future.

- Students are very appreciative of all that the school offers and the way it gives them a fresh start even when they lose control of their behaviour.
- Students say that they feel safe and trust staff to share any problems they may have. They have confidence that the staff will sort out any issues. They say that there are few incidents of bullying. The school's most recent survey indicates high levels of satisfaction from students, parents and carers.
- The school has worked hard to improve attendance. More students attend school on a regular basis now and enjoy being greeted warmly by staff. They choose a nutritious breakfast to start the day on a positive note. Although attendance is below average, it is improving. The school has good plans in place to ensure it continues to rise.

The leadership and management requires improvement

- Although this is an improving school, leadership and management require improvement because there is too much variability in the progress made by students, in the quality of teaching, and in the management of students' behaviour.
 - Leaders have taken some effective actions to improve provision but most of these are relatively new. For example, the deputy headteacher has strengthened the cycle of teacher appraisal in order to improve the quality of teaching. Targets to improve individual teachers' performance are based on accurate monitoring. However, they are not measurable or focused sufficiently on the progress students make. Therefore, they are not holding teachers fully to account so that all students make at least good progress in all subjects.
 - Subject leaders have made a good start in checking on their subjects, particularly the mathematics leader. They provide support and advice for their colleagues, particularly in ensuring assessments are accurate. However, they are relatively inexperienced in helping others to improve the teaching of specific subjects and in checking on the progress students make.
 - The assistant headteacher has successfully introduced a system for tracking students' progress. This information is now used well to identify underachievement and to target resources to boost progress. However, the progress students make is not compared with the progress made by students nationally. Therefore, the school cannot confidently say that its students are making good or better progress.
 - The headteacher is well supported by the deputy headteacher. They have developed a hardworking team of staff who share their commitment to securing better outcomes for all students. Evaluation of what the school needs to do to improve is broadly accurate and has helped them to draw up comprehensive and realistic plans. A lot has been achieved but they know that there is further to go.
 - There are regular checks on teaching and learning, and leaders observe lessons as part of this. Nevertheless, leaders' evaluation of teaching is too generous because they do not use all the evidence available in order to make an accurate judgement about the quality of teaching over time.
 - The local authority is aware of the areas where the school requires improvement. It has
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provided, and intends to continue to provide, effective support for leaders and teachers to develop their skills.

- The school provides a broad range of activities, subjects and courses. Although these offer an increasing number of academic and vocational options, there are not enough planned activities to enable students to communicate effectively, and to read and write in English and in other subjects.
- There are some positive features which contribute well to the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of the students. For example, students understand and show compassion about the moral and ethical issues of Nazism and slavery.

■ **The governance of the school:**

- Governance requires improvement because the governing body does not challenge and support the school in equal measure. Its members are not involved enough in school self-evaluation.
 - Governors are committed to the school, attend meetings regularly and ensure that safeguarding procedures are effective. They have also made sure that the school is financially stable.
 - Governors are involved in the targets set for the headteacher's performance but they do not have enough knowledge about the performance of other teachers and how this relates to their pay.
 - Although governors have some knowledge about students' achievement, they do not know how well the school performs in relation to schools nationally.
 - Governors have a good understanding of the new project set up recently so that the pupil premium funding is used more effectively but they do not know what impact this funding has had on students' achievement.
 - Governors do not challenge and hold the headteacher and senior leaders to account enough in order to raise attainment, improve progress and increase the consistency in the quality of teaching and learning.
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What inspection judgements mean

School		
Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	An outstanding school is highly effective in delivering outcomes that provide exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs. This ensures that pupils are very well equipped for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 2	Good	A good school is effective in delivering outcomes that provide well for all its pupils' needs. Pupils are well prepared for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 3	Requires improvement	A school that requires improvement is not yet a good school, but it is not inadequate. This school will receive a full inspection within 24 months from the date of this inspection.
Grade 4	Inadequate	<p>A school that has serious weaknesses is inadequate overall and requires significant improvement but leadership and management are judged to be Grade 3 or better. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p> <p>A school that requires special measures is one where the school is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the school's leaders, managers or governors have not demonstrated that they have the capacity to secure the necessary improvement in the school. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p>

School details

Unique reference number	123630
Local authority	Shropshire
Inspection number	402183

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	Edwin Thorpe
Headteacher	Robin Wilson
Date of previous school inspection	5 July 2010
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