

Woodlands School

Forty Foot Road, Leatherhead, Surrey, KT22 8RY

Inspection dates 14–15 May 2014

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Good	2
	This inspection:	Outstanding	1
Achievement of pupils		Outstanding	1
Quality of teaching		Outstanding	1
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Outstanding	1
Leadership and management		Outstanding	1

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is an outstanding school

- The headteacher, very ably supported by staff and the governing body, has a highly ambitious vision for the future of the school. Since her appointment there has been a strong and successful focus on raising achievement through high quality training and monitoring.
- Pupils' achievement has improved and the vast majority now achieve outstandingly well. Their progress in literacy and in numeracy is excellent.
- Pupils in the Early Years Foundation Stage achieve extremely well and enjoy their time at school.
- Pupils in Year 11 and those in the sixth form attain a wide range of qualifications so that they are very well prepared for their futures.
- Much of the teaching is outstanding and is never less than good. High quality individual plans ensure that each pupil understands what is expected, enabling them to complete their tasks quickly so that they make rapid and sustained progress.
- Improvement in the use of communication aids has resulted in all pupils having a means to make choices and have a voice.
- Pupils' behaviour is exceptional in and around the school. High quality individual support ensures that all pupils are extremely well supported. Pupils feel safe at school.
- Parents are overwhelmingly supportive of the school and very pleased with their children's education.
- The exceptionally wide range of rich learning opportunities, subjects and topics engage pupils extremely well, and contributes to their strong spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.
- Leaders have built on the good outcomes from the previous inspection and are rigorous about improving and maintaining high quality teaching. Training for all staff is thorough, and close links with local and other special schools have forged very effective partnerships.
- Governors have improved their monitoring roles since the last inspection, and now provide excellent support and challenge to leaders. They ensure that all pupils, including those who are eligible for additional government funding, achieve equally as well as other pupils.
- The overall effectiveness of the sixth form is outstanding.

Information about this inspection

- The inspectors observed 12 lessons, most jointly with the senior leaders. In addition, the inspectors made a few shorter visits to observe pupils' learning, and listened to some pupils read.
- Meetings were held with the headteacher, senior leaders and managers, other staff, members of the governing body and a representative from the local authority.
- The inspectors observed the work of the school and looked at a number of documents, including the school's own information about pupils' progress, planning and monitoring documents, safeguarding information, the sports premium action plan and pupils' files.
- Inspectors took account of the 33 responses to the online survey (Parent View) and spoke to a parent during the inspection. Inspectors also spoke to a few drivers and escorts on the school buses. Inspectors took account of the schools' own staff questionnaires.

Inspection team

Denise Morris, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Sue Cox

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- The school caters for pupils with severe or profound learning difficulties from across Surrey.
- Almost all pupils have a statement of special educational needs. A very few are on assessment places and are awaiting a statement. About a quarter of pupils have additional visual, hearing or multi-sensory impairments, or have a diagnosis of autism.
- Pupils join the school at different times, not just in the Early Years Foundation Stage.
- Most pupils are of White British heritage. The proportion of pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds is very low, and there are a very few pupils new to speaking English. There are more boys than girls.
- The proportion of pupils for whom the school receives the additional government funding, known as the pupil premium, is above average. This funding is for pupils who are eligible for free school meals and those in the care of the local authority.
- The school receives primary school sports funding for its primary aged pupils.
- Additional funding is also received to help those in Year 7 catch up.
- Sixth form pupils attend the nearby North East Surrey College of Technology (NESCOL) to undertake work-related courses and training.
- The school does not enter pupils early for examinations.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Work closely with pupils and parents to improve attendance further by reducing the proportion of pupils taking holidays during term time.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils

is outstanding

- All groups of pupils achieve exceptionally well and make outstanding progress from their low starting points whilst at the school.
- Pupils make excellent progress in speaking, listening, literacy and numeracy, and in their personal development, because of the very high focus placed on these areas.
- Pupils with profound and multiple learning difficulties or with a diagnosis of autism make outstanding progress, as a result of their improved communication skills through the use of pictures and symbols.
- The few pupils with additional visual or hearing impairments benefit from specialist support and therapies so that they can achieve as well as their classmates.
- The youngest pupils in the Early Years Foundation Stage make an excellent start to their school lives as they make rapid progress and achieve exceptionally well. This was evident as all children became totally absorbed in learning their individual targets for literacy and numeracy. They were happy and confident as they took control, telling staff whether they wanted to continue with their tasks or change activity.
- From their low starting points, pupils' progress in numeracy is better than expected, because of the high quality practical approaches used in all classes.
- Pupils have many excellent opportunities to improve their personal development and build their confidence and self-esteem. The primary sports funding has enabled the purchase of helmets so that pupils can learn to ride bikes. A trampoline has also been purchased to enable pupils to have rebound therapy. Pupils with profound and multiple learning difficulties benefit greatly from this therapy. Additional expertise is used to help teachers improve their teaching of physical education.
- Pupils in Year 7 also benefit from additional funding which has been used to provide them with hand-held tablets so that they can find things out for themselves. They are very proud of these and use them daily, building their confidence and self-esteem.
- Sixth form pupils make outstanding progress in relation to their starting points. By the time they leave the school, all sixth form pupils attain nationally recognised qualifications, preparing them all exceptionally well for their futures.
- Work-related courses at the local college, and at the college farm, also help to prepare sixth formers for life after school.
- Pupils eligible for the pupil premium make similar progress to other pupils in literacy and numeracy. These pupils also receive support in using modern technologies, together with music therapy which is helping to improve their self-esteem.
- Parents who responded to the online questionnaire are very pleased with their child's education and overwhelmingly say that their children achieve well at the school.

The quality of teaching

is outstanding

- Pupils benefit from outstanding teaching so that they achieve challenging targets and make excellent progress from their starting points. Teaching typically challenges pupils to find things out for themselves and respond to questions in whatever way they can.
- Activities involving literacy are particularly well planned. Additional support, often by teaching assistants, is carefully focused so that these activities are set at the right level.
- The use of communication aids, such as signs, symbols, pictures or technology, enables pupils who find speaking or writing difficult to have a way of responding to questions and expressing their own ideas.
- The teaching of reading is extremely well supported through the regular teaching of sounds that letters make. This results in the most able pupils learning to recognise and read simple texts, whilst others learn to use symbols to help them read simple sentences and enjoy stories.

- The teaching of mathematics is very successful because of the strong focus on activities enabling pupils to use resources to work out answers. For example, primary aged pupils showed that they were able to work quickly to identify the difference between big and little objects. Records show that pupils have regularly exceeded their mathematics targets over the past two years.
- The checking of pupils' progress is accurate and always helpful, providing examples of how pupils can improve their skills. For secondary aged pupils, homework is set regularly. End of term checks are very well used to plan the next steps, this is particularly evident in English and mathematics.
- The quality of teaching in the sixth form is excellent because the approaches used by staff are set at the right level, which enables pupils to achieve a range of qualifications.
- The effectiveness of off-site training for older pupils, where they undertake work-related courses, both in college and at the college farm, is outstanding. This is because it provides high quality experiences in personal care, construction and cooking that prepare pupils very well for their futures.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are outstanding

- Pupils' behaviour in and around the school is exemplary. The pupils enjoy school, arriving happily on their buses each morning. Pupils say that they really enjoy school. Their attendance is rising and is similar to other special schools. There have been no exclusions in recent years. However, a few pupils still take too many holidays during term time.
- The school's work to keep pupils safe and secure is outstanding. Pupils say that they feel really safe. The most able pupils have a good awareness of the importance of staying safe on the internet and in the community.
- The school council told the inspectors that there is no bullying. Observations of school records showed this to be true.
- Pupils' excellent behaviour is promoted extremely well by the wide range of different activities, including after-school clubs, trips and residential experiences. Pupils are proud of their achievements. One boy, for example, told the inspectors that he was a disc jockey for a social event organised by the school council.
- The promotion of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is excellent. Through assemblies, visits and outside speakers, pupils have an accurate view of life outside their own communities. Pupils in Years 7 to 11 showed this as they learned about Hindu lifestyles and beliefs.
- Pupils in the sixth form show excellent personal skills, benefiting from tasks and activities that meet their needs and abilities extremely well. They regularly take on simple jobs around the school, such as helping to clear away chairs after assembly.

The leadership and management are outstanding

- The headteacher is very ambitious for the school and has driven improvement successfully by making sure that all pupils do their very best, so that they acquire the highest possible qualifications. She is extremely well supported by the senior leadership team and governors.
- Leaders make effective use of the national standards for teaching to improve teachers' skills. There are several examples of staff at all levels undertaking training to improve their skills so that their pupils make even better progress and which are linked to increases in teachers' salaries
- For example, the introduction of a new communication system, following training and research by a member of staff, has resulted in some pupils, including those with autism, being able to explain themselves clearly for the first time. As a result, they are now able to respond to questions and make sentences independently.

- Leaders have introduced new, robust systems for checking pupils' progress, particularly in English and mathematics. This enables staff to make sure that each pupil is on track to achieve their challenging targets, and for staff to speed up the learning of any pupil falling behind.
- Information gathered about pupils' achievements over the past two years shows that the school is successfully improving pupils' results and is closing the gaps in achievement.
- Pupils who are eligible for additional government funding are now on target to meet their goals, and to make similar progress as their classmates.
- The school provides high levels of personalised training for staff that is closely linked to their own targets for improvement. Regular training for all staff in aspects such as behaviour and safeguarding ensure consistent practice across the school.
- The local authority works exceptionally well with the school by supporting leaders in checking the quality of teaching and learning and by providing training for staff and governors. It supports the school extremely well.
- There are some excellent partnerships with local schools, colleges and businesses, providing experiences that will benefit pupils in the future.
- The rich range of subjects and topics taught includes many different therapies and ensures that pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is very well supported.
- Leaders promote very good relationships with parents, who are extremely pleased with the school. 'My son has been at the school for ten years, since he was two years old. We feel that the school is currently the best it has ever been. Woodlands is a fabulous place, we feel extraordinarily lucky,' wrote one parent.
- Through what they provide, leaders successfully eliminate discrimination and promote good relationships which make sure that all pupils have equal access to the experiences on offer.
- Leadership of the sixth form is excellent because it promotes the learning and personal development of pupils very well and offers high quality academic and work-related opportunities.
- Outstanding leadership of the Early Years Foundation Stage is evident in the rigorous and regular observations that place a high emphasis on improving pupils' skills.
- Safeguarding procedures meet requirements and there is very secure recording and review of all medical issues and accidents or incidents.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - The governing body is very supportive, providing high quality challenge to leaders. Governors are fully involved in checking what the school offers pupils, looking at teaching and behaviour and at how well pupils are doing. They have a clear view of what is working well and what needs improving, including a good knowledge of the quality of teaching. Governors have a very good range of skills which they use to benefit the school, and have a good understanding of the information about pupils' performance and how it compares with similar schools. Since the last inspection, governors have sought excellence through rigorous training and by working with governors from a local outstanding school to improve their skills. Reciprocal visits have strengthened their awareness of their responsibilities, so that they now support other local school governors. Effective management of finances means that money is well spent to enrich pupils' learning, including additional government funding. This money is used well to provide additional support, resources and therapies for eligible pupils, enabling them to make similar progress to their classmates. Governors know about setting targets for teachers and work to ensure that the best teachers and staff are rewarded through promotion. They rigorously tackle any underperformance.

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	125469
Local authority	Surrey
Inspection number	426400

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	84
Of which, number on roll in sixth form	11
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Fiona Martland
Headteacher	Adrienne Knight
Date of previous school inspection	19–20 October 2010
Telephone number	01372 377922
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