

Woodlands School

Takely End, Kingswood, Basildon, SS16 5BA

Inspection dates

1–2 July 2014

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Inadequate	4
	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		Good	2

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

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

- Although most teaching is now effective, and achievement is rising strongly, recent improvements need to be sustained for teaching and achievement to be securely good.
- Leaders set ambitious targets for all but a small number of teachers' expectations of what pupils can achieve are too low, which limits their progress.
- Most marking makes clear how pupils can improve their work, but many do not make the changes recommended.
- At GCSE, pupils eligible for the pupil premium make less progress than their peers in English and mathematics because of the legacy of previous poor teaching.
- Not all teachers work with teaching assistants effectively to maximise their impact on the progress made by pupils who have disabilities and special educational needs.
- When activities are not engaging, or when pupils find them too easy or too difficult, some become passive and a small minority sometimes disrupts the learning of others.
- The contribution that different subject areas make to the development of pupils' extended writing skills is uneven, which limits the progress of some.
- Teachers do not always challenge pupils who do not complete or present their work appropriately.

The school has the following strengths

- The determined and assured leadership of the executive headteacher and others is securing rapid improvements in teaching. Systems are in place to check the quality of the school's work and sustain this progress.
- Effective teaching is enabling most pupils to make accelerated progress in most subjects.
- The school's monitoring data indicate that attainment is rising, particularly in English and science at GCSE.
- Pupils enjoy school. They feel safe, and are very well looked after by pastoral leaders and others. Bullying is rare.
- Well-targeted training is helping teachers to improve.
- New leaders and teachers, together with strengthened governance, have secured the school's capacity to improve further.
- The school works well with parents, who are positive about all aspects of its work.

Information about this inspection

- The inspection team conducted 18 lesson observations and reviewed a number of short sessions. Senior leaders worked alongside inspectors to observe lessons.
- Meetings were held with senior, subject and other leaders, the executive headteacher, groups of pupils, representatives of the interim executive board (IEB), and the local authority.
- Inspectors looked at a range of other evidence, including a selection of pupils’ books, the school’s improvement plans, self-evaluation, attainment and progress data, and lesson monitoring information.
- Inspectors took account of the 88 responses to Ofsted’s online Parent View questionnaire.

Inspection team

Jason Howard, Lead inspector	Her Majesty’s Inspector
Clive Allen	Additional Inspector
Ann Short	Additional Inspector

Full report

In accordance with section 13 (4) of the Education Act 2005, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector is of the opinion that the school no longer requires special measures.

Information about this school

- Woodlands is a larger than the average-sized secondary school.
- The executive headteacher was appointed in November 2013.
- At the previous inspection in October 2013, the school was placed in special measures because it was failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education. Inspectors subsequently visited the school in January 2014 to monitor its progress.
- Most pupils are White British. The proportion of pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds is well below the national average, as is the proportion who speak English as an additional language.
- The percentage of pupils who are eligible for the pupil premium is above average. This is additional government funding for pupils known to be eligible for free school meals and for the small number at this school who are looked after by the local authority.
- The proportion of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs supported by school action is below the national average. The proportion with a statement of special educational needs or supported at school-action plus is above average.
- There is specially resourced provision for pupils with special educational needs. This is a local authority funded speech and language unit with provision for nine pupils. The pupils are taught in mainstream classes, supported by the special educational needs department.
- The school makes use of alternative provision for a number of individual pupils at JET Basildon; ITECH Basildon; Writtle College; South East Essex College, Basildon; and Prospects College, Canvey Island.
- The school has specialist status in the performing arts.
- In 2013, the school did not meet the government's current floor standard, which sets the minimum expectations for pupils' progress and attainment. The school's monitoring data indicate that it will meet the floor standard in 2014.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of teaching across all subjects, so that all pupils make accelerated progress, by ensuring that:
 - all teachers use their information about pupils' progress to plan sufficiently engaging and challenging work so that all can take the next steps in their learning
 - all pupils understand how to complete tasks successfully and meet their targets
 - teachers ask questions to check how much pupils understand and to allow all to develop their ideas fully
 - all pupils respond to regular feedback on their work which makes clear how they can improve it further, and make the necessary changes
 - all teachers work with teaching assistants to ensure that disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs make rapid progress.
 - all teachers help develop and reinforce pupils' literacy skills, particularly in extended writing
 - all pupils present their work well, complete tasks fully, and do this to the best of their ability.
- Raise achievement by sharing the most effective strategies that support those eligible for the pupil premium so that gaps at GCSE between their achievement and that of other pupils narrow.
- Eliminate low-level disruption by improving teaching further, and applying the school's behaviour policy consistently.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils

requires improvement

- Standards of attainment on entry to the school are below the national average. Pupils' attainment at GCSE, particularly in English and science, was lower than expected in 2013 as a result of previous poor teaching. The proportions making expected progress in English, science and mathematics was low, and most groups of pupils underachieved.
- As a result of strong leadership, considerable improvements have been made to the quality of teaching in the past year. New staff have been appointed and less effective teachers have left the school. Gaps in the knowledge and understanding of a significant proportion of older pupils have narrowed, particularly in English and science. The proportion of pupils on track to gain five or more A* to C grades, including in English and mathematics, this year has increased substantially.
- Regular assessments enable teachers and leaders to assess how well pupils are making progress towards their individual targets. Current assessment information indicates that, overall, pupils of all abilities are making progress in English and science that is at least in line with expectations. A much higher proportion of Year 11 pupils are expected to gain an A* to C grade in English, mathematics and science this year. The most able are on track to make the progress they should, and attain highly, across all subjects.
- Levels of progress and attainment have improved in other subjects at both Key Stage 3 and 4, though the rate of improvement varies. Key Stage 4 pupils have made strong progress in many subject areas, including art, drama, music and physical education. Overall, they have made less progress in modern foreign languages and the humanities.
- A variety of strategies, including one-to-one and small-group tuition, have helped narrow the gap considerably between the achievement of those eligible for the pupil premium and that of their peers in almost all subjects at Key Stage 3. Gaps remain too wide in both English and mathematics at Key Stage 4, with most working at over one GCSE grade behind their peers. This is because of a legacy of poor teaching.
- Disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs have made accelerated progress recently because of improvements in the quality of the support that they receive. Where teaching assistants and teachers work less effectively together to support individuals, progress slows.
- The school does not use early entry to GCSE examinations.
- The school regularly monitors the well-being and achievement of the small number of pupils who receive alternative provision to ensure that it meets their needs. They make good progress in developing skills that will prepare them for the next stage of education or employment.
- Extra funding provided by the government is used effectively to help pupils who are behind in reading and mathematics when they start secondary school to catch up. Older pupils read confidently, but the extended writing skills of some require improvement.

The quality of teaching

requires improvement

- Overall, the quality of teaching has risen dramatically over the past year because leaders have provided teachers with considerable challenge and support to help them improve. In most subjects, and particularly in key subjects such as English and science, substantial improvements

in the learning, progress and achievement of Key Stage 4 pupils are evident. In some areas, the impact of the improved teaching is quite recent and there has not been time to demonstrate that it has led to good progress.

- Most teachers use the information they have about pupils' progress to plan tasks that are of the right level of challenge for them; their high expectations help pupils to move forward in their learning, including the most able, who benefit from the more demanding activities they complete, and their ability to deepen their understanding through questioning and discussion. Recent training has enabled and encouraged teachers to use a greater variety of techniques that engage pupils and help them to develop their thoughts and ideas. Pupils told inspectors that this variety helps to sustain their interest, and that the techniques most teachers now use help them to deepen their understanding.
- Most teachers give pupils regular feedback on their work that makes clear how to improve it. Some pupils respond and make more rapid progress as a result. Others do not because they do not understand how to improve their work, or because they have forgotten the feedback by the time they complete the next similar task.
- When activities are less engaging pupils are slow to get started and sometimes they are not sure how to complete tasks. Some make little progress because they are given work to do that is too easy or too difficult for them. As a result, a few pupils become passive or disrupt the learning of others. Leaders are tackling these issues relentlessly, and minimising their impact.
- Leaders have made changes to the way in which pupils with special educational needs are supported by teachers and teaching assistants, and are monitoring the impact of these carefully. Many teachers lead and support the work of teaching assistants effectively; pupils make slower progress when this is not the case.
- Teachers in all subject areas help to reinforce pupils' literacy skills by explaining technical language and correcting spelling errors. Pupils are taught how to complete well-structured pieces of extended writing in a number of subjects, including English, history and geography, but they have fewer opportunities to practise these skills in other subjects. A range of strategies, including the school's 'accelerated reading' scheme, have had a considerable impact in promoting the enjoyment of reading and increasing pupils' reading ages. Few examples of the promotion of numeracy skills were seen outside of mathematics.

The behaviour and safety of pupils

requires improvement

- The behaviour of pupils requires improvement. Although most pupils display very positive attitudes to learning, a few arrive at lessons without the correct equipment, remain passive during discussions and do not complete their work with much urgency or present it with pride.
- The extent of low-level disruption within lessons has decreased considerably because teaching has improved and as a result of the school's effective policies for dealing with poor behaviour. Although these are not applied consistently by all teachers, pupils report that teachers usually challenge any disruptive behaviour successfully.
- Around the school site, adult supervision helps to ensure that the conduct of pupils is generally calm. Pupils respect the new school buildings and are proud of them.
- Most pupils are punctual and polite; they enjoy good relationships with leaders, teachers and each other, and appreciate the support they receive from pastoral leaders. The incidence of

temporary exclusions has fallen dramatically over the past year because the school's new behaviour policy ensures all alternatives to exclusion are made use of.

- The school's work to keep pupils safe and secure is good. Pupils feel completely safe at school. They say that serious incidents of bullying are rare, and that racism is almost unknown. Although they are unaware of any incidents of homophobic bullying, they report that some pupils casually use homophobic language.
- Attendance is in line with the national average and has improved in recent months because leaders have improved procedures for making sure that pupils attend school.

The leadership and management are good

- Leaders and managers communicate their high expectations and ambition for rapid improvement in all areas of the school's work. The executive headteacher has worked decisively, quickly and effectively to focus the work of leaders on addressing the most urgent areas for improvement.
- The executive headteacher ensures that all leaders are held to account for standards in their areas. Detailed and appropriate plans for improvement, together with effective training, make clear what needs to be done and help leaders to make the changes. Systems are in place to regularly check the impact of teaching on pupils' progress, and to ensure that the ideas and approaches that work best are shared.
- Support to improve standards within key departments has been highly effective, and has helped to raise standards considerably in English, mathematics and science. New 'lead practitioners' have been appointed in English and mathematics, and a new subject leader of science has been appointed, to secure the capacity for continued improvement in these areas.
- A recently appointed assistant headteacher responsible for improving teaching has developed a range of different training opportunities, including tailored support, that are helping teachers reach their challenging performance management targets. A shared approach to improvement is allowing teachers to observe and use good techniques, and discuss what works best in bringing about improvement. These activities are helping to rapidly increase the proportion of effective teaching.
- Salary progression is linked to pupils' progress; difficult decisions have been taken in cases where the quality of teaching or leadership has remained unacceptably low.
- Leaders have made changes to the courses pupils study to ensure that these are appropriate to their needs, interests and abilities. A number of pupils are completing IGCSE English and making better progress as a result. Far more pupils are now working towards higher-tier GCSE mathematics so that they can attain A* or A grades.
- Engagement with parents is strong; their level of attendance at school events is excellent and the regular progress updates they receive help them to support their children's learning. Responses on Parent View indicate that parents' opinions about standards in all areas of the school's work are highly positive.
- Leaders make good use of external support. Through the executive headteacher, the school works in partnership with the local, highly successful Appleton School. This allows teachers and leaders to share their expertise, and subject leaders to help each other establish the accuracy of their marking of key assessments and predictions. The local authority has provided extensive

support to help train and develop leaders, including subject leaders; they can now drive further improvements themselves with less need of external support.

- The school meets all statutory requirements for the safeguarding of pupils.

■ **The governance of the school:**

- The interim executive board's decision to appoint the executive headteacher, and make additional appointments to further strengthen leadership capacity, has enabled progress towards the school's development plans and increased the school's capacity to make further improvements.
- Those responsible for governance are exceptionally well-informed about all aspects of the school's performance. They have a very clear understanding of the questions they need to ask senior and other leaders, based on their ongoing analysis of performance data and the information they receive about all aspects of the school's work. They understand their responsibilities in regard to safeguarding and ensure that arrangements meet statutory requirements.

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	115228
Local authority	Essex
Inspection number	441670

This inspection was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. The inspection was also deemed a section 5 inspection under the same Act.

Type of school	Secondary
School category	Maintained
Age range of pupils	11–16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	1493
Appropriate authority	Interim executive board
Chair	Terry Reynolds
Headteacher	Karen Kerridge
Date of previous school inspection	16 October 2013
Telephone number	01268 282146
Fax number	01268 531655
Email address	kke@woodlandsschool.essex.sch.uk

Any complaints about the inspection or the report should be made following the procedures set out in the guidance 'raising concerns and making complaints about Ofsted', which is available from Ofsted's website: www.ofsted.gov.uk. If you would like Ofsted to send you a copy of the guidance, please telephone 0300 123 4234, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.



You can use Parent View to give Ofsted your opinion on your child's school. Ofsted will use the information parents and carers provide when deciding which schools to inspect and when and as part of the inspection.

You can also use Parent View to find out what other parents and carers think about schools in England. You can visit www.parentview.ofsted.gov.uk, or look for the link on the main Ofsted website: www.ofsted.gov.uk

The Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted) regulates and inspects to achieve excellence in the care of children and young people, and in education and skills for learners of all ages. It regulates and inspects childcare and children's social care, and inspects the Children and Family Court Advisory and Support Service (Cafcass), schools, colleges, initial teacher training, work-based learning and skills training, adult and community learning, and education and training in prisons and other secure establishments. It assesses council children's services, and inspects services for looked after children, safeguarding and child protection.

Further copies of this report are obtainable from the school. Under the Education Act 2005, the school must provide a copy of this report free of charge to certain categories of people. A charge not exceeding the full cost of reproduction may be made for any other copies supplied.

If you would like a copy of this document in a different format, such as large print or Braille, please telephone 0300 123 4234, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.

You may copy all or parts of this document for non-commercial educational purposes, as long as you give details of the source and date of publication and do not alter the information in any way.

To receive regular email alerts about new publications, including survey reports and school inspection reports, please visit our website and go to 'Subscribe'.

Piccadilly Gate
Store St
Manchester
M1 2WD

T: 0300 123 4234
Textphone: 0161 618 8524
E: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
W: www.ofsted.gov.uk

© Crown copyright 2014

