

Woodcroft School

Whitakers Way, Baldwins Hill, Loughton, Essex IG10 1SQ

Inspection dates 22–24 June 2016

Overall effectiveness **Good**

Effectiveness of leadership and management	Good
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Good
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Good
Outcomes for pupils	Good

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school

- The headteacher provides good leadership and receives good support from the directors. Together they have ensured that all the independent school standards are met.
- Leaders at all levels are ensuring that teaching, learning and assessment are good, and are promoting a strong culture for good behaviour in which pupils thrive.
- The headteacher and the board of directors have successfully addressed the areas for improvement identified at the previous inspection. They are ensuring that the school continues to improve.
- Staff are providing good welfare, support and guidance for all pupils. Consequently, pupils are making significant progress in their personal development, and their attendance is improving.
- Pupils respond well to the consistent management of their behaviour because staff maintain excellent relationships with pupils.
- Teachers have good knowledge of each pupil's learning needs. They use this information effectively to provide activities, methods and resources which pupils can do.
- Pupils make at least good progress in a wide range of subjects, including reading, writing and mathematics. A few pupils make outstanding progress.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Sometimes teachers do not provide sufficient challenge for the learning needs of the most able pupils.
- Occasionally teaching assistants do not promote pupils' learning effectively.
- Leaders have not fully implemented systems of assessment for all subjects.

Compliance with regulatory requirements

- The school meets the requirements of the schedule to The Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014 ('the independent school standards') and associated requirements

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of teaching and raise achievement by making sure that:
 - teachers consistently extend the thinking of the most able pupils
 - teaching assistants use every opportunity to extend the learning of those pupils they are supporting.
- Ensure that leaders implement their new systems of assessment to measure progress across all subjects.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management is good

- The headteacher, school leaders and the board of directors have made sure that all of the independent school standards are met, including those for the leadership and management of the school. They have created a strong culture for learning, achievement and good behaviour. They have effectively addressed the areas for improvement identified at the previous inspection.
- The use of assessment information to inform lesson planning has improved so that learning tasks are more closely matched to pupils' different learning needs. Outcomes from the monitoring of teaching and learning now pinpoint the main strengths and weaknesses in provision and their impact. The school has established close partnerships with local authorities and other schools to learn from outstanding practice.
- Reviews of the school's work since the last inspection by the directors and external consultants, inspection findings, and the views of representatives from local authorities sought during the inspection, show that the school is continuing to improve. In the online questionnaire returns from Parent View, and during discussions, parents praised the work of the school and nearly all said they would recommend the school to others. Staff work strongly as a team and share the drive for improvement.
- The headteacher and board of directors regularly review and update policies, implementing them successfully and ensuring that staff have read and understood them. Effective procedures for managing the performance of staff are in place in order to raise pupils' achievement by improving the quality of teaching. The headteacher and the managing director regularly visit lessons to look at the impact of teaching and assessment on pupils' learning. They make good use of the outcomes of their observations and information about pupils' progress to pinpoint areas for development, providing relevant training and support for staff.
- The school's self-evaluation is accurate, and leaders use the outcomes to establish appropriate focused priorities for improvement. Leaders make sure that teachers provide a stimulating and structured learning environment to promote the basic skills of communication, literacy and numeracy across a range of subjects.
- Teachers provide good feedback to pupils on how well they are doing consistent with the school's marking policy.
- The curriculum is good. It covers all of the required areas of learning with a well-balanced and broad range of subjects relevant to the needs of all pupils. Detailed schemes of work are in place for all subjects. The school has successfully developed these for the secondary-aged pupils it proposes to admit, with a sharp focus on preparation for the world of work and independent living.
- Individual learning programmes are planned within topics which are clearly linked to the provision specified in pupils' statements of special educational needs or their education, health and care plans. This ensures that the curriculum is suitably matched to pupils' capabilities with a strong emphasis on developing their communication and social interaction skills. The curriculum is enriched with a wide range of activities such as music therapy, trips to places of interest and good opportunities to participate in physical activities such as horse riding, swimming and forest walks.
- The curriculum promotes pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development well, especially through assemblies and the programme of personal, social, health and economic (PSHE) education. These support pupils' personal development very well and ensure that pupils are prepared for the next stage of their education. Pupils learn to appreciate and respect others from different cultural traditions and religious backgrounds. They learn about democracy and the rule of law, especially through the work of the school council. Pupils develop their social skills through sharing and turn-taking, which was seen in an excellent assembly delivered by the oldest pupils who celebrated their achievements in front of the whole school, as well as parents.
- Leaders have improved the assessment systems since the previous inspection so that the small steps of progress pupils make in basic skills are carefully tracked each term. They are currently developing a system of assessment across the wide range of subjects to replace the previous national curriculum assessment system based on levels.
- Staff are successfully promoting equality of opportunity through the personalised curriculum to ensure that all pupils have the same opportunity to learn and make progress. They tackle any form of discrimination by promoting good relationships and providing good role models to encourage mutual respect.
- **The governance of the school**
 - The board of directors are holding the school to account for its work and providing good support for

staff. The managing director works in the school for two days per week, and has a very accurate view of the effectiveness of all aspects of its work. He works closely with the headteacher on school improvement and is supported by a small team of educational consultants who provide independent guidance and advice for the board of directors and school leaders.

- The directors receive regular reports from the headteacher and have an accurate review of the impact of teaching on pupils' learning and progress. They ensure that all policies are up to date and are implemented effectively and that the school's website complies with requirements.
- The directors monitor the performance of the headteacher well and set challenging targets for school improvement.
- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective. Thorough procedures are in place to check the suitability of staff and visitors to work with pupils. The school works extremely closely with parents and outside agencies to assure the safety and well-being of pupils. All training in child protection, health and safety and safeguarding is up to date.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment is good

- Pupils make good progress in their learning and personal development because teaching and assessment are good. Pupils' work, and evidence from the school's monitoring records of teaching over time, show that teachers make good use of well-chosen resources, such as computers, symbols and visual timetables to make sure all pupils access learning and make equally good progress. Teachers plan an interesting range of activities to stimulate learning, such as identifying the flags of those countries that are participating in the forthcoming Olympic Games in Brazil.
- Teachers maintain excellent relationships with pupils and manage pupils' behaviour consistently well. As a result, pupils concentrate on their learning, listen carefully to staff and follow instructions.
- The teaching of basic skills of communication, language, literacy and numeracy are good and these are promoted well across different subjects. Teachers work effectively with speech therapists to ensure that pupils develop their communication and social skills, as seen in a lesson where pupils were responding well to encouragement, sharing and taking turns in constructing parts of a building, and communicating their requirements using toy plastic bricks.
- Teaching assistants nearly always provide good support for pupils' learning, making good use of visual aids, real objects for pupils to refer to, and symbols matched to words to facilitate communication and understanding. However, on a few occasions the support provided to individual pupils does not promote their learning effectively enough, which slows their progress.
- Teachers usually match learning tasks well to the individual needs of pupils, although assessments of teaching over time and pupils' work show that sometimes teachers miss the opportunity to extend the learning of the most able pupils.
- The headteacher and proprietor have ensured that all the independent school standards relating to teaching, learning and assessment are met.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare are good

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good. The school nurse provides thorough oversight of pupils' medical needs to promote their good health. Staff provide good welfare, support and guidance for each individual pupil. They provide good role models for pupils by showing respect and treating them with dignity, and pupils respond well to the school's positive approach to managing their behaviour. As a result, exclusions are rare and physical restraint is seldom used.
- Staff make good use of praise and encouragement, applying the school's systems of rewards and sanctions well to create a positive atmosphere for learning. Consequently, pupils re-engage with learning quickly as they grow in confidence and develop self-esteem.
- Pupils move safely around the school and handle equipment, including computers, with care. Staff provide high levels of supervision and actively engage with pupils in their activities at lunchtime and breaktimes to ensure that they play safely in the playground. Leaders ensure that the premises and grounds are secure, and they thoroughly assess all potential hazards, putting in place effective controls to minimise any risks.

- Bullying is rare and there are few recorded incidents of racism, bullying or prejudice of any kind. Parents confirm this and say that the school tackles any form of bullying well should it occur.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good. Pupils respond well to the school's discipline policy, which is consistently implemented in classrooms and around the school. As a result, pupils quickly settle into their routines and rapidly improve their behaviour as they develop more appropriate ways of expressing themselves.
- Discussion with parents and pupils, visits to lessons, and pupils' work show that they develop good attitudes to learning. Their written work is nearly always neat and tidy and they take a pride in their achievements, as seen when Year 6 pupils performed dance routines, sang 'Bridge Over Troubled Water' and played 'Greensleeves' confidently and with pride in the whole-school assembly.
- Pupils' attendance rapidly improves during their time in school. Most pupils reach broadly average attendance from low attendance on entry to the school. This is due to the effective way staff deal with persistent absence through close monitoring.
- The headteacher and proprietor have ensured that all the independent school standards relating to personal development, behaviour and welfare are met.

Outcomes for pupils

are good

- Pupils enter the school with poorly developed communication skills and low levels of attainment. The school's reliable information about the progress they are making in basic skills, the quality of work in their books and visits to lessons over time show that most pupils are making at least the progress expected of them. A significant number are making better progress than this. A few pupils are making outstanding progress in music, in writing and in mathematics from their different starting points.
- Staff carefully assess each pupil's attainment in reading, writing, mathematics, as well as their personal development, when they first arrive at the school. They use this information effectively to set individual challenging targets and plan personalised programmes of work for each pupil. They carefully monitor the progress pupils are making towards achieving them.
- It is not possible to accurately track the progress pupils are making across all subjects of the new curriculum as leaders have not yet fully developed the system. Nevertheless, evidence from pupils' books and leaders' assessments of the impact of teaching shows that pupils are making good progress across all subjects.
- All groups of pupils, including the few disadvantaged pupils and those with additional special educational needs and/or disabilities, are making equally good progress to that of their classmates because learning programmes are carefully tailored to their individual needs.
- The most able pupils usually make good and sometimes outstanding progress, although their books show that occasionally their thinking is not extended sufficiently to make the faster progress of which they are capable.
- When the well-conceived curriculum, plans and schemes of work for the school's proposed intake of secondary-aged pupils are implemented, these will enable them to make good progress across a wide range of subjects.
- The headteacher and proprietor have ensured that all the independent school standards relating to outcomes for pupils are met.

School details

Unique reference number	115425
Inspection number	10006009
DfE registration number	881/6031

This inspection was carried out under section 109(1) and (2) of the Education and Skills Act 2008, the purpose of which is to advise the Secretary of State for Education about the school's suitability for continued registration as an independent school.

Type of school	Special school
School status	Independent school
Age range of pupils	5–11 years
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	41
Number of part time pupils	1
Proprietor	Woodcroft School Limited
Chair	Daniel Edwards
Headteacher	Brian Sainsbury
Annual fees (day pupils)	£54,500
Telephone number	020 850 81369
Website	www.woodcroftschoo.net
Email address	mail@woodcroftschoo.net
Date of previous inspection	20–21 March 2012

Information about this school

- Woodcroft School is a day special school run by a board of directors under the proprietorship of Woodcroft School Limited. It occupies a large Stuart-era property close to Epping Forest. The school provides education for boys and girls aged from five to 11 years with complex learning and behavioural difficulties associated with varying degrees of autism.
- The school is registered to admit up to 60 pupils aged between five and 11 years. There are currently 42 pupils on roll between the ages of five and 11 years. All have a statement of special educational needs or an education, health and care plan relating to their complex communication and learning difficulties arising from autism. Most pupils have had a disrupted education, which has had an adverse impact on their achievement.
- All pupils are referred by, and are funded by, local authorities in and around London.
- The school's intake is ethnically diverse and no pupils are at an early stage of learning English.
- The school opened in 1963 and at that time it was registered to admit pupils aged between two and 11 years. The school has never admitted two-year-olds, and no longer provides for children in the early years. The Department for Education (DfE) has granted a request to change the lowest age range of admission to five years of age as the school no longer intends to admit children of Reception age.
- During the inspection the school notified the inspector that it made a request to the DfE on 12 May 2016 to change the upper age range of pupils from 11 to 13 years, without changing the overall number of pupils it is registered for. The DfE has asked Ofsted to include a material change inspection within the remit of this inspection.
- The school aims to provide 'a safe and supportive environment within which pupils can develop their full potential and live healthy, satisfying lives within society'.

Information about this inspection

- The inspector visited a wide range of lessons and activities, including a celebration assembly and horse riding, jointly with the headteacher to look at the impact of teaching on pupils' learning and progress over time.
- The inspector looked at the school's website and a range of documentation in order to check compliance with the independent school standards for continued registration for the current age range of pupils and for the proposed change in the upper age range from 11 to 13 years. These included: the curriculum policy and schemes of work for all subjects offered to primary pupils and intended to be offered to secondary-age pupils; records of progress and assessment systems; procedures relating to health and safety and safeguarding; records of risk assessments within school and on outside activities; the first aid policy; fire risk assessments and procedures; the complaints procedure and complaints log; and all policies and documentation made available to parents in hard copy and through the school's website.
- The inspector also looked at documentation, curriculum planning and accommodation to determine whether or not the school is equipped to extend its upper age range from 11 to 13 years.
- Meetings were held with the headteacher and the managing director of Woodcroft School Limited.
- The inspector considered the views of parents. He looked at the responses of 10 parents to the online questionnaire, Parent View, and spoke to five parents who accompanied their children to school. He also spoke informally to pupils about their school.

Inspection team

Declan McCarthy, lead inspector

Ofsted Inspector

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