

Woolston Brook School

Green Lane, Padgate, Warrington, Cheshire WA1 4JL

Inspection dates

9–10 January 2019

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
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Good

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school

- Senior leaders and governors promote a culture of high expectations for pupils' behaviour and achievement. Their ambitions are endorsed by all staff.
- The leadership team is being expanded to support a more distributed approach to leadership. This is in its early stages.
- Pupils' physical and emotional well-being are at the heart of the school's work. Staff nurture, praise and encourage pupils. They support pupils to feel safe and grow in confidence.
- Pupils currently make good progress. They benefit from a personalised curriculum that helps them to engage in education and prepares them well for their next steps.
- Pupils typically attain strong passes in GCSE art and gain a good range of vocational qualifications. These qualifications support pupils to access further education or training.
- In 2018, many pupils did not gain strong passes at GCSE and they did not have other qualifications in English, mathematics, science and information technology. This reflects weaker progress in the past than is currently the case.
- The promotion of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is a strength. Pupils' education is enriched with many exciting experiences.
- Teaching is adapted successfully to each pupils' abilities and their specific social and emotional needs. It engages pupils' interests and extends their learning.
- Pupils have a clear understanding of how to produce high-quality work in art and physical education (PE). They enjoy applying their skills to explore, reason and investigate in mathematics and topic work. However, such skills are not developed as fully in some other subjects.
- Assessment is used effectively to plan teaching from day-to-day. However, assessment systems do not easily enable leaders to obtain an overview of pupils' progress in all subjects.
- Pupils are respectful towards staff and show pride in their achievements. Pupils' behaviour and attendance improve significantly as they grow to value their education.
- For some pupils, lack of effective communication skills is a barrier to their progress. Developing these skills remains a priority in improvement planning.
- The new leadership team is building on existing good practice and driving further improvements effectively. School improvement planning is based on incisive self-evaluation.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Share the most effective practice to improve teaching and learning by:
 - developing pupils' skills in reasoning, experimentation, investigation and problem-solving in all subjects
 - developing pupils' communication and listening skills
 - helping pupils to understand how to produce high-quality work.
- Develop the curriculum further to offer a range of qualifications that reflect the breadth in teaching and learning.
- Improve leadership by:
 - developing the skills of the wider leadership team
 - establishing assessment systems that enable leaders to have a strategic overview of pupils' progress and attainment in all subjects in order to plan support for both pupils and staff.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Good

- The recently appointed headteacher provides clear vision and drive to build on existing good practice and secure further improvements. She is unequivocally focused on ensuring that each pupil makes the best possible progress. The headteacher is ably supported by the deputy headteacher.
- Leaders promote a culture of high expectations for pupils' behaviour and achievement. Staff across the school endorse these high expectations and reinforce them in all their interactions with pupils.
- Leaders have identified the most important priorities to secure improvements. Self-evaluation is incisive and informs school improvement planning effectively.
- The headteacher is introducing new systems to log safeguarding concerns and track pupils' progress. Currently, assessment is used well to inform teaching and learning from day-to-day, but leaders cannot easily obtain an overview of pupils' progress. They are therefore not fully able to identify whether pupils are making enough progress in all subjects and are not fully able to plan further support where needed.
- The performance of staff is managed effectively. Staff are extremely positive about their professional development. Training is planned carefully to support priorities for school improvement as well as develop the skills of individuals. The deputy headteacher leads training with skill and provides an excellent role model in teaching and learning.
- There is a growing team of senior and middle leaders who are beginning to develop their leadership skills. This more distributed approach to leadership is at the early stages of development. Leaders are keen to develop their skills, for example, by participation in nationally accredited leadership courses.
- Staff say that they enjoy working at the school. The vast majority are positive about all aspects of the school's work, including the changes that are being made. A small minority feel that there are some inconsistencies in leadership by the wider leadership team.
- The curriculum is broad and personalised to the needs of pupils. The key stage 2 curriculum is well planned, with a focus on key skills alongside exciting topics that arouse pupils' curiosity. At key stages 3 and 4, the curriculum supports pupils to develop key literacy and numeracy skills and provides a range of academic and vocational subjects. Pupils' creativity is promoted very effectively in art.
- Curriculum planning is not as successful as it could be in ensuring that pupils gain as many qualifications as possible that reflect their progress and abilities. For example, all pupils are entered for GCSE in English, mathematics, science and information technology. In 2018, pupils did not gain strong passes and did not have any other qualifications in these subjects to reflect the progress they had made.
- Pupils' experiences are enhanced with many exciting additions to the curriculum. Visits out of school inspire and deepen learning. For example, visits to the recycling centre and film festival have enriched pupils' writing at key stage 2. Outdoor education and

work with local charities at key stages 3 and 4 support the development of pupils' leadership and enterprise skills.

- Spiritual, moral, social and cultural education is a strength of the school. Pupils' spiritual development is enhanced through their work in the school's wonderful 'art garden', which celebrates the art of different cultures. Pupils also learn about different faiths and cultures through visits to places of worship and discussion in personal, social and health education. Their social skills are developed effectively across the curriculum and in nurture sessions, where they discuss moral issues.
- Pupils learn about British Values in nurture sessions as well as across the curriculum. They increasingly show tolerance, respect and thoughtfulness in their own behaviour. Pupils' increasing engagement in education prepares them well for life in modern Britain.
- The PE and sports premium is used effectively to enrich pupils' experience and increase their participation in physical activity. For example, pupils' success in a local boccia competition has led to them representing Cheshire in a national tournament.
- The pupil premium and special educational needs (SEN) funding are used effectively to enhance the curriculum and increase pupils' engagement in education. Funding is used to ensure that the curriculum supports pupils' individual education plans.
- The school has established constructive partnerships with local schools. Staff support mainstream schools, for example by providing training in special educational needs. They share effective practice with other special schools in local authority networks. Links with local community organisations, charities and businesses support pupils' careers education and their understanding of society.
- The majority of parents who made their views known are extremely positive about the school. They appreciate the personalised curriculum and highly praise the approach staff take to teaching and care. They say, for example, 'My son is now doing so well, due to his needs being met, in a learning environment that helps him flourish.' A small number of parents expressed concern about pupils' use of inappropriate language and lack of work to complete at home during periods of exclusion. The headteacher is reviewing these issues.

Governance of the school

- Governors are knowledgeable and effective. They have a clear vision for the school and are ambitious for pupils. They have a detailed understanding of strengths in provision and areas for improvement based on thorough analysis of data, reports from leaders and checks on provision.
- Challenge and support to school leaders is based on perceptive questioning and review of the school's provision against key performance indicators.
- The performance of the headteacher is managed well. Governors ensure that school improvement planning is based on the right priorities, and the headteacher's performance targets reflect these.
- Finances are carefully managed. The spending of additional funding, such as the pupil premium and SEN funding, is closely monitored. Governors ensure that funds have the intended impact on pupils' learning and personal development.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- Staff are vigilant in ensuring the safety and well-being of pupils. They have a clear understanding of how to recognise safeguarding concerns and what to do if they have concerns. Records of behaviour and safeguarding incidents are thorough. Appropriate action is taken to ensure that pupils are safe in school.
- Staff work in partnership with external agencies to ensure that pupils' safeguarding needs are met. This includes close liaison with social care, health and mental health professionals, services for children with SEN and for those who are looked after.
- Safeguarding policies and procedures take account of government guidelines and are followed by staff. Safer recruitment requirements are met.
- All staff have completed training in safeguarding, appropriate to their responsibilities, and on positive handling. Staff have a range of additional qualifications that support their work with pupils who have social, emotional and mental health needs.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Good

- Teachers assess pupils' knowledge and skills effectively and adapt teaching successfully to meet their individual needs. Teachers plan work for pupils that is suitably challenging, and they use effective approaches to help pupils overcome their social and emotional barriers to learning.
- Teachers use questioning thoughtfully. They support pupils to recall and make links with prior learning and develop their thinking. Teachers' questioning probes and extends pupils' understanding.
- Teaching activities are planned carefully to interest and engage pupils. When learning about the sinking of the Titanic at key stage 2, for example, pupils' interest was heightened as they took on the roles of people known to have been on board. Pupils were curious to find out what happened to their characters and whether any played a part in the catastrophe.
- Teaching assistants support learning effectively. They provide the right amount of support to help pupils succeed, while making sure that pupils do what they can independently. Teachers and teaching assistants are adept at redirecting pupils' attention to their work.
- Mathematics is taught well. Many pupils have gaps in their mathematical knowledge when they join the school, due to missed education in their past. Thorough assessment and targeted teaching supports pupils to fill the gaps in their learning.
- The promotion of pupils' speaking and listening skills is a major drive in teaching and learning across the school. Limited communication skills are a barrier to learning for many pupils. They lack the skills to discuss their learning in depth and to consider and respond to points of view that differ from their own. Developing these skills rightly remains a priority in improvement planning.
- Reading skills are taught effectively. At key stage 2, skilled teaching in phonics and the development of pupils' comprehension skills, supports pupils to become more

proficient readers. Their skills are built on effectively throughout key stages 3 and 4.

- The teaching of writing is good across the school. The emphasis on spelling, grammar and punctuation supports pupils to write with increasing fluency. Pupils write for a range of purposes across many topics and subjects. Pupils' writing skills are developed particularly well at key stage 2, and in English lessons at key stages 3 and 4, where their writing is lively and interesting.
- Teaching is highly effective in art and PE. In these subjects, explicit teaching supports pupils to gain a clear understanding of how to produce high-quality work. Pupils know what they need to do in order to improve their work and gain higher grades in assessments and examinations. Pupils' understanding of how to produce higher-quality work is not developed as successfully in some other subjects.
- When pupils are given opportunities to experiment, explore and investigate, they enjoy their learning and develop their skills. In art, for example, pupils learn from mistakes by trying out different techniques. In PE and outdoor pursuits, they grow in confidence as they collaborate and experiment with new skills. In mathematics, pupils enjoy applying their knowledge to problems that require them to use reasoning skills. However, pupils' opportunities to engage in this type of learning are limited in other subjects.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Good

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good.
- Pupils' physical and emotional well-being are at the heart of the school's work. Staff work constructively with pupils to help them overcome the social and emotional barriers that have obstructed their learning in the past.
- Staff get to know pupils extremely well and are patient, understanding and caring. Staff use praise and encouragement to motivate pupils and enable them to experience success. These positive relationships support pupils to settle into school and gain the confidence they need to attend regularly and participate in learning.
- Pupils feel safe in school. They say that bullying happens rarely and they trust staff to deal with any incidents fairly and effectively. Pupils who made their views known say that they are happy to be in school and feel secure.
- There is a strong emphasis on helping pupils to understand how to stay safe and healthy in and out of school. Pupils are taught about e-safety and they develop a good understanding of risks associated with online activity and social networks. In personal, social and health education lessons (PSHE) pupils learn about how to eat healthily and minimise risks to their safety. For example, they learn about risks associated with extremism, substance abuse and gangs.
- Careers education, information, advice and guidance are strengths in the school's provision. This begins at key stage 2 with enrichment activities focusing on developing leadership and teamwork. Pupils' employability skills are developed further at key stages 3 and 4 in dedicated lessons, engagement in charity work, various outdoor pursuits and work experience. Pupils receive good-quality independent careers advice

and develop realistic aspirations for their futures.

- A small number of pupils attend alternative provision to support work-related learning. Their safety is ensured through regular checks, including on their attendance, and thorough risk assessments. Some pupils are educated within the community by school staff; their attendance is monitored closely.
- Parents' views are consistent with inspection findings. They say, for example, that 'Staff have a really good rapport with the children and treat them with respect and kindness,' and 'I cannot praise the school enough for accepting, nurturing and enabling [our child] to grow socially, emotionally and academically.'

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good.
- Pupils' behaviour improves the longer they are in school. Pupils learn to regulate their behaviour with sensitive support from staff. They are respectful towards staff and follow directions well.
- Pupils are typically focused and responsive in lessons. They show pride in their achievements and look after their books well. When pupils struggle to concentrate or control their emotions, staff use positive strategies to ensure that any incidents that occur do not escalate.
- Pupils behave well around the school. They get on with each other and socialise during breaktimes. Pupils appreciate the wonderful displays of art work and look after the school environment carefully.
- Overall attendance for the whole school is below average but shows improvement over time. Prior to being admitted to this school, often pupils have had very low attendance at their previous schools. Attendance is also adversely influenced by the specific complex circumstances of some pupils. Leaders do all they can to support families and pupils in getting to school and participating in education. The attendance of individual pupils typically improves as they settle in and grow in confidence.
- Permanent exclusion is rare but the rate of fixed-term exclusion has been high in the past and above the national average. Leaders recognise this, so policies and procedures to minimise the risk of exclusion have been revised and classes have been reorganised. These changes are having a positive impact; the rate of exclusion fell considerably in the second part of the autumn term this academic year. Leaders have appropriate plans to ensure that this is sustained.

Outcomes for pupils

Good

- Pupils currently in school make good progress from their varied starting points. All pupils have an education, health and care plan for social, emotional and mental health difficulties. Their academic ability is wide-ranging. The work in pupils' books is presented well and shows good progress in their knowledge and skills across the curriculum.
- The school works closely with the virtual school, when appropriate, to produce good-

quality personal education plans for children who are looked after by the local authority. This ensures that these pupils make good progress.

- At key stage 2, pupils make at least good and often better progress in reading, writing and mathematics. This is because gaps in their basic skills are identified precisely and addressed. Pupils' progress in other subjects improves as their key skills develop, especially in topic work, where teaching is skilfully planned to appeal to their interests.
- At key stages 3 and 4, pupils who are currently in school make good progress. Pupils who need support with academic subjects make good gains in their learning due to sensitive and well-targeted individual support. The most able pupils are provided with suitable challenge and also make good progress.
- Pupils' progress in art is outstanding. Pupils learn a range of techniques and produce art work that is imaginative and inspiring. Pupils typically do extremely well in GCSE art every year. All pupils who took GCSE art in 2018, which was half the cohort, attained a grade 4 and above, and the majority attained grades 7 to 9.
- Pupils' attainment at GCSE in other subjects was not as high in 2018 as it has been in previous years. All pupils were entered for GCSEs in English, mathematics, science and information technology. They attained at grades 1 and 2 in English, mathematics and science, but very few attained strong passes at grade 4 and above. This was partly due to high absence among the cohort and the fact that a high proportion joined the school late in Year 10 with many gaps in their learning. No pupils attained a pass in information technology, because they did not complete the course work. Many pupils did not acquire other qualifications in these subjects.
- Pupils typically attain good qualifications in a range of vocational subjects each year. All pupils leave with some qualifications that support them to gain places in further education or training on leaving school. The very good careers advice, good personal development and good progress of pupils currently in school prepare them well for their next steps in education, employment or training. In 2018, 94% of pupils went into further education or training. All of the current Year 11 cohort have secured places for when they leave school.

School details

Unique reference number	111501
Local authority	Warrington
Inspection number	10057891

This inspection of the school was carried out under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

Type of school	All-through
School category	Community special
Age range of pupils	7 to 16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	67
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr Keiron Powell
Headteacher	Mrs Maureen Brettell
Telephone number	01925 818 549
Website	www.woolstonbrookschoo.co.uk
Email address	woolstonbrook_school@warrington.gov.uk
Date of previous inspection	4–5 November 2014

Information about this school

- Since the last inspection there have been a number of changes. The school has moved into a different building and the number of pupils on roll has doubled. There were no pupils at key stage 2 at the time of the last inspection. The current headteacher was appointed in September 2018. The chair of governors has held this position for two years.
- The school provides education for pupils who have an education, health and care plan for social, emotional and mental health.
- The proportion of disadvantaged pupils is well above average. A number of pupils are looked after by the local authority.
- The majority of pupils are boys. The vast majority are White British. A small proportion are travellers of Irish heritage.
- The school works in partnership with the local authority. Staff provide training in SEN

to local mainstream schools. Leaders have also established a teaching and learning partnership with Chaigheley School, an independent special school in Warrington, enabling subject leaders to share good practice.

- A small number of pupils attend alternative provision to pursue vocational studies for one or two days a week at Warrington Vale Royal Collegiate or Cornerstones, an independent educational provider. A small number are educated by school staff within the community.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed teaching and learning and scrutinised pupils' written work.
- They met with leaders, governors, staff and local authority representatives
- They spoke with pupils to gain their views on the work of the school.
- A range of documentation was scrutinised, including action plans, self-evaluation, monitoring of teaching and performance management, safeguarding procedures, health and safety checks and risk assessments. School policies were seen.
- Inspectors took account of six responses to Parent View, the Ofsted online questionnaire, and 32 responses to the staff survey.

Inspection team

Jean Olsson-Law, lead inspector

Ofsted Inspector

Martin Hanbury

Ofsted Inspector

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