

Woodlands Community College

Minstead Avenue, Southampton, Hampshire SO18 5FW

Inspection dates

9–10 January 2019

Overall effectiveness	Requires improvement
Effectiveness of leadership and management	Requires improvement
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Requires improvement
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Requires improvement
Outcomes for pupils	Requires improvement
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Requires improvement

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a school that requires improvement

- For several years, pupils at this school have not made enough progress. Too few pupils have achieved the qualifications of which they are capable.
- Senior leaders have started to improve pupils' attendance but absence remains too high, particularly that of disadvantaged pupils and of those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND).
- Leaders' plans for improving the progress of pupils with SEND have not yet had a positive impact.
- Many pupils move to other provisions during the year. Leaders have not closely tracked why the pupils have left or provided appropriate support to retain them.
- The governing body has not held leaders to account robustly enough. Governors' questions are not focused on the highest priorities for improvement.
- Teachers do not consistently communicate high expectations of good behaviour or the standard of work that they want pupils to achieve.
- Teaching is not consistently good across all subjects. Some teachers do not plan lessons carefully enough to provide sufficient challenge for the most able and appropriate support for pupils with SEND.
- In lessons where pupils do not receive effective support, pupils give up too easily and become restless, making it difficult for other pupils to concentrate.
- Pupils' behaviour in corridors is immature and boisterous, particularly at the change of lessons and the end of the day.

The school has the following strengths

- The new headteacher and senior leaders have quickly introduced many new systems to improve the areas of highest priority.
- New leaders and teachers are very experienced in their specialist areas. Their expertise is already having an impact on pupils' progress, especially in mathematics and science.
- Leaders have recently implemented a curriculum that more closely than previously meets the needs of all pupils.
- Teachers care deeply about improving the life chances of the pupils in the school. They work hard to be sure that pupils are happy, well looked after and ready to learn.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of teaching so that it is consistently good or better, to enable all groups of pupils to achieve well by:
 - planning lessons to meet the needs of different groups of pupils, particularly by increasing the challenge for the most able and providing the necessary support for pupils with SEND
 - raising teachers' expectations of what pupils are capable of and making sure that pupils understand what is required of them
 - making sure that all pupils understand the content of lessons before moving on to the next task
 - continuing to share the best practice that exists across the school.
- Improve pupils' personal development, behaviour and welfare by:
 - improving the attendance of pupils, particularly of those who are disadvantaged and of those with SEND
 - making sure that corridors are free of risk for pupils and staff at the change of lessons and the end of the school day
 - continuing to train and support staff to manage pupils who may present very challenging behaviour.
- Improve the effectiveness of leadership and managers by:
 - continuing to implement plans to improve pupils' outcomes rapidly
 - carefully monitoring the improvements in leadership of the provision for pupils with SEND
 - strengthening the record-keeping on vulnerable pupils who are in danger of exclusion or becoming lost to the education system
 - evaluating the impact of the external support for governance to ensure governors' increased effectiveness.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Requires improvement

- The new headteacher has a clear, aspirational vision for the school. Since his appointment in April 2018, he has taken rapid action to improve pupils' progress and behaviour. It is too soon for his actions to have changed fully the culture of the school, but improvements are noticeable.
- Leadership of provision for pupils with SEND is underdeveloped. The headteacher has already deployed the services of a headteacher from a special school to conduct a review of the provision and has recently made the changes that she recommended. Parents and carers have mixed views about how effectively their children's special needs are being met.
- Some teachers who responded to the staff questionnaire told us that they do not feel that leaders support them consistently well in managing the challenging pupils' behaviour. Pupils told us that behaviour has improved recently but that sometimes pupils are not able to manage their own behaviour. A minority of pupils do not respond well to the first stages of the school's behaviour system.
- The majority of pupils are disadvantaged. Leaders use the additional funding for disadvantaged pupils wisely to improve outcomes, increase attendance and provide additional support for pupils who are disadvantaged and pupils with SEND. Nonetheless, the performance of disadvantaged pupils is still well below that of other pupils nationally with similar starting points.
- Pupils who join the school in Year 7 unable to read at the expected standard receive specific help to improve. Teachers use additional funding to provide support for pupils to develop reading skills rapidly and, while some are successful, the process also identifies additional needs that some pupils continue to have beyond Year 7.
- The headteacher has recruited and developed middle leaders and teachers who have the right skills to improve teaching and learning. Most pupils are now taught by teachers who are subject specialists. As a result, pupils' progress is improving.
- The headteacher quickly identifies where external help is needed and has engaged a wide range of support that is boosting the quality of teaching and learning. Teachers' morale has improved and services are provided that pupils desperately need, for example counselling for pupils who are struggling with social and emotional difficulties.
- Middle leaders have recently introduced a robust process to track pupils' progress. They have put in place sharply focused strategies to help pupils who are underperforming and need additional support to achieve what they are capable of.
- Leaders have previously been too generous when assessing pupils' work and consequently have overestimated the grades that pupils would achieve in examinations. Leaders and teachers are working with examination boards, local schools and other reliable organisations and assessing pupils' work more accurately.
- Leaders responded quickly to review the school's curriculum following the examination results in 2018. Leaders now provide a curriculum that better meets the needs of the pupils, offers a wide range of subjects and allows for different levels of assessment.

Pupils who are most able now have more suitable options to study at key stage 4, for example three separate science GCSE courses.

- The proportion of pupils who join and leave the school during the school year is much higher than average. Previously, the records of pupils who left were patchy and did not explain the support that was provided. Leaders now have a clear strategy for supporting vulnerable pupils with the intention of retaining them. A small group of vulnerable pupils in Years 10 and 11 follow a modified curriculum to enable them to gain some qualifications.
- Leaders have, this term, extended the school day by an hour to include a programme of extra-curricular activities, such as Rock Challenge, the Duke of Edinburgh's Award and Radio Woodlands. The offer provides pupils with opportunities to engage in sporting, cultural and practical activities as well as to access support in their learning.
- Leaders promote pupils' social, moral, spiritual, and cultural understanding well through assemblies and tutor time. There are many opportunities for pupils to practise their emerging skills in these areas across the curriculum, including within the extra-curricular programme.

Governance of the school

- Governors had previously not held leaders to account rigorously enough to make sure that the effectiveness of the school is good. As a result, governors have not provided the challenge that leaders needed to stem the recent decline in performance.
- A recent review of governance, conducted by the local authority, has resulted in new governors joining the team and the appointment of a new chair. These actions have given the governors a clear direction and the vigour to become more effective than previously.
- Governors are open to using external support to improve their effectiveness, for example they followed sound advice when recruiting the new headteacher and have secure plans in place to be guided by a national leader of governance.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- Leaders make sure that all staff are trained and up to date with guidance to fulfil their responsibilities effectively. All staff know the system for referring concerns to the designated safeguarding leader. The system for logging information about pupils' welfare allows rapid analysis of information and communication when concerns are raised.
- Pupils told us that they feel safe in school because of newly installed cameras around the site and that there is always an adult that will listen to them if there is something that they are worried about.
- The school's system for vetting new staff is secure and well managed. Governors know their responsibilities for safe recruitment of staff and fulfil their duties for safeguarding carefully.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Requires improvement

- There is too much variation in the expertise of teachers across the different subjects. Too often, teachers do not plan lessons to challenge the most able pupils or to provide effective support for pupils who are struggling to understand how to complete tasks. The lack of consistency in the quality of teachers' practice hinders pupils' progress.
- Teachers do not clearly communicate their expectations of pupils' behaviour in lessons, or the standard of work that they would find acceptable from pupils' different starting points.
- When teachers set pupils work that is at the right level for them, pupils remain engaged throughout the lesson and clearly feel a sense of achievement by the end. Pupils' attitudes to learning in these lessons are positive. Pupils quickly lose interest become bored, however, when they are unable to complete tasks. Many pupils do not have the resilience to maintain their focus on the task in hand.
- Teachers do not always recognise when pupils have not understood explanations, for example in science and French. When teachers move on without checking the pupils' understanding pupils become frustrated and disengaged. Overtime, this leads to low motivation and low-level disruption in the class.
- Trained teaching assistants support well pupils who have education, health and care plans. Leaders have not made sure that all teachers are sufficiently skilled to support pupils with SEND in lessons.
- Teachers do not routinely give pupils work to do independently outside of the classroom, although the school publishes a detailed homework timetable on the website. Pupils told us that homework is only set when they have revision to do for assessments.
- Teaching is improving, especially in the lower years of the school. There are some examples of where teachers' secure subject knowledge, high expectations and effective behaviour management are having a positive impact on pupils' progress.
- Pupils' work is improving because of the school's policy to appoint subject specialists. The good subject knowledge of current mathematics staff has led to an improvement in the standard of pupils' work in a short period of time.
- Teachers understand the urgency to increase pupils' knowledge and create opportunities through activities and assessments that demand pupils to recall prior learning. Pupils enjoy lessons that have such an emphasis, particularly in history, PE, engineering and science.
- Teachers encourage pupils to use skills across the curriculum that they learn from subjects. Pupils are particularly good at using the literacy skills that they have learned in English to extend their work in history and science. In most subjects teachers are diligent about checking the accurate use of literacy in pupils' books, including correct spellings and grammatical errors. Many teachers are insistent that pupils use subject-specific vocabulary fluently and respond to teachers' questions articulately.
- Leaders are aware of the poor progress made by pupils in Years 10 and 11 because of weak teaching in the past. Leaders are trying to mitigate the gaps in pupils' knowledge, skills and understanding in a variety of ways, including through staff training, regular

monitoring, targeted support where needed and extending the school day for Year 11 to provide extra lessons. It will take time until all pupils attain the grades that are expected from their different starting points.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Requires improvement

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare requires improvement.
- Pupils do not consistently take enough pride in their work to ensure good progress. There are some examples of neat presentation and accurate work, providing good records that are useful for revision. However, there is too much variation across and within classes.
- Pupils do not always display good attitudes to learning, typically in lessons where teachers' expectations for purposeful learning have not been made clear. In these lessons, pupils do not show respect for their teachers or their peers.
- Pupils who are given specific responsibilities in school fulfil them with pride and maturity. Inspectors were welcomed by the head boy and head girl, who spoke enthusiastically about their roles and responsibilities. Pupils who are involved in the leadership and coaching programme with Southampton Football Club spoke highly of the quality of the provision.
- Staff work tirelessly to make sure that pupils are safe, happy and ready to learn. Pupils told us that they are able to access a wide range of support to manage their emotional and physical health.
- Pupils learn how to keep themselves safe through a comprehensive programme of personal, social and health education (PSHE) during tutor times. Pupils were able to tell us of lessons about protecting them from dangers in their local community and beyond. Although pupils had work in their books about the dangers of succumbing to risks such as extremism and radicalisation, most pupils were unable to recognise activities that could lead to threats to their safety.
- The PSHE curriculum also provides pupils with an understanding of fundamental British values. For example, pupils in Year 10 study individual liberty as a topic and learn about freedom of speech, tolerance and respect. Pupils led us to informative displays around the school that reinforce the teaching of each of the values.
- Leaders are proud of the high-quality careers education and guidance that they provide for pupils in all year groups. The majority of pupils in Year 11, on reflection, feel that they received the right amount of information that was helpful but pupils were unhappy because they have not had the opportunity to experience work. Leaders have listened and introduced work experience for pupils in Year 10 this year. Many of the activities, such as the mock interviews for Year 10 and life skills for Year 9, are taught with the support of professionals from local businesses.
- Leaders work with the local authority and other local schools to provide alternative temporary placements for pupils who are at risk of exclusion or of dropping out of education permanently. When this occurs, pastoral leaders responsibly keep a check on

the pupils' attendance and progress.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is requires improvement.
- Overall, absence rates have been far too high for many years and, while there has been some improvement recently, pupils' attendance is still below the national average for secondary schools. Leaders' strategies to improve attendance have been successful for individual pupils by working attentively with their families. Leaders know the reasons for poor attendance and continue to focus on disadvantaged pupils and those with SEND.
- Teachers work hard to manage pupils calmly in lessons by closely adhering to the school's procedures. Pupils usually respond well but some pupils do not have the self-discipline to remain focused on their work and can disrupt the learning of others.
- Pupils generally behave in an orderly manner around the school, except for during the change of lessons and at the end of the school day when boys, in particular, are very boisterous. While pupils do not intend to cause harm, their immature behaviour can be a risk to pupils and staff.
- Parents who responded to the Parent View questionnaire expressed concerns about behaviour and bullying. Pupils are aware of the different forms that bullying can take. Pupils recognise that behaviour is improving and said that, while incidents of bullying occur, the teachers are good at resolving it.
- Pupils are mostly polite and welcoming. Most pupils respect their teachers, and appreciate the support provided. Pupils appear to be happy in their social groups during breaktimes and respect their environment.
- Leaders' work to improve the pupils' behaviour and provide pupils with appropriate provision has resulted in a dramatic reduction in exclusions. The percentage of pupils that were permanently and temporarily excluded last year was below the national averages for secondary schools. The school's information shows that exclusion numbers have continued to fall during this academic year.

Outcomes for pupils

Requires improvement

- Pupils' outcomes in GCSE examinations have been in the lowest 10% of all schools nationally for at least the past three years.
- Pupils' examination results last year were, on average, at least a grade lower than those of others with similar starting points nationally. Although disadvantaged pupils and the small number of pupils who joined the school with low prior attainment made better rates of progress than other groups, these were still well below those of other pupils nationally with similar starting points.
- The new leadership team understands that improving pupils' outcomes is a high priority. Senior leaders' strategies to improve middle leadership and the quality of teaching are beginning to have a positive impact on pupils' progress, particularly for pupils in key stage 3, where poor learning habits are not as entrenched as in Years 10

and 11.

- Weaknesses in the quality of teaching and inconsistencies in providing appropriate support for individuals at the right time have led previously to disadvantaged pupils, those pupils with special educational needs and the most able pupils making inadequate progress. There is an improving picture for the current pupils. However, the rate of progress of pupils with above-average starting points remains too slow.
- Teachers are closely monitoring pupils' progress by using well-considered assessments and checking the work in pupils' books. Pupils who are at risk of not performing as expected from their different starting points are receiving specific help outside of lessons and regular mentoring.
- Pupils who are disadvantaged are beginning to make more progress than previously in English and mathematics, as a result of improved teaching. Pupils who are disadvantaged in key stage 4 achieve better outcomes in subjects that they have chosen to study, including physical education, construction, music and engineering.
- In most lessons, staff do not provide adequate support for pupils who have special needs and/or disabilities. As a result, this large group of pupils are not making good progress from their different starting points.
- Inspectors' analysis of pupils' work shows that, in many subjects, the standard of work is improving, particularly in English, mathematics, science and history. Pupils are gaining knowledge and learning skills that they can recall and use in a range of different subjects across the curriculum.
- Leaders closely monitor pupils' destinations, keeping an eye on their future achievements long after they have left the school. Previously, the proportion of pupils who remained in education, employment or apprenticeships was much lower than that nationally. However, last year's figures did show significant improvement.

School details

Unique reference number	116465
Local authority	Southampton
Inspection number	10053029

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

Type of school	Secondary comprehensive
School category	Maintained
Age range of pupils	11 to 16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	562
Appropriate authority	Local authority
Chair	Oliver Bligdon
Headteacher	Jim Henderson
Telephone number	02380 463303
Website	www.woodlands.southampton.sch.uk
Email address	info@woodlands.southampton.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	12–13 July 2016

Information about this school

- The school is a smaller than the average-sized secondary school, serving a suburban area of the city of Southampton.
- The large majority of pupils are White British. The number of pupils who are from minority ethnic backgrounds is lower than the national average.
- Almost 60% of pupils are eligible for the pupil premium.
- Many pupils leave and join the school during the school year.
- The proportion of pupils with SEND, including those with an education, health and care plan, is significantly above average.
- A new headteacher has led the school since April 2018. Many other staffing changes have also occurred.
- The school works in close collaboration with the local authority and other local schools to provide for pupils who are at risk of exclusion and of disappearing from education.

The school makes use of alternative provision through the Compass, a pupil referral unit.

- Southampton City Council provides and brokers support for leadership and governance.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed learning in 36 lessons, across a range of subjects and age groups, and scrutinised pupils' written work. Some of the observations were conducted jointly with members of the leadership team. Inspectors also visited 14 tutor-time periods.
- Meetings were held with senior and middle leaders and representatives from the local authority and governing body. In addition, inspectors met with teachers, teaching assistants and support staff.
- Inspectors met with pupils in all years, both formally and informally, including disadvantaged pupils and those with SEND, to discuss their views about their experience of school.
- Inspectors looked at the school's documentation, including the evaluation of the school's effectiveness and priorities for future improvement. Inspectors reviewed progress, behaviour and attendance information relating to current pupils, and governors' minutes.
- The school's policies relating to safeguarding, pupils' behaviour, the use of additional funding, including the pupil premium, and the curriculum were also scrutinised.
- Inspectors considered 75 responses to Ofsted's online survey, Parent View, including 73 free-text responses, as well as 54 responses to the pupil survey and 50 responses to the staff questionnaire, provided by Ofsted.

Inspection team

Karen Roche, lead inspector	Ofsted Inspector
Richard Carlyle	Ofsted Inspector
Debbie Godfrey-Phaure	Ofsted Inspector

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