

# Woodcroft School

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

## Inspection dates

25 to 27 June 2019

<b>Overall effectiveness</b>	<b>Good</b>
Effectiveness of leadership and management	<b>Good</b>
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	<b>Good</b>
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	<b>Good</b>
Outcomes for pupils	<b>Good</b>
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Good

## Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

### This is a good school

- Leaders work assiduously to continue to improve the school. They have ensured that all the independent school standards are met.
- The headteacher and directors have created a caring and supportive environment where pupils are safe and extremely well cared for.
- The ethos of meeting pupils' individual needs is at the heart of the school. Pupils thrive because the provision for personal development and welfare is outstanding.
- Teachers plan lessons that are closely matched to the needs of the pupils. Activities are interesting. As a result, pupils enjoy their learning.
- Most pupils make at least good progress in a range of subjects. Sometimes, pupils are given work that does not sufficiently challenge their ability, because it does not give them the opportunity to take responsibility for their learning.
- Transition arrangements for pupils entering and leaving the school are a strength.
- Behaviour management is a strength. Staff know the pupils well and use their knowledge to effectively support pupils to manage their behaviour.
- Pupils follow an inspiring curriculum that is well matched to their academic, social and emotional needs. However, in some academic subjects, there is not a clear sequence of learning that allows pupils to deepen their skills or understanding.
- Pupils' communication abilities are developed well.
- In some subjects, the most able pupils are not making the progress of which they are capable when they lose interest in their work.
- Safeguarding is given high priority and policies and procedures are followed rigorously by all staff. However, some of the documentation related to staff training is not kept up to date.
- Parents value the work of the school and are highly complimentary about the difference the school is making to their child's life.

### 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 learning so that pupils make outstanding progress by:
  - ensuring that pupils are given the opportunity to take responsibility for their learning
  - providing more challenge
  - ensuring that the most able are moved swiftly on to the next stage of learning before they lose interest.
- Further improve leadership and management by:
  - developing subject schemes of work that show how the sequence of learning develops pupils' knowledge and skills as they progress through the school
  - ensuring that all safeguarding records are kept up to date so that they are always accurate.

## Inspection judgements

### Effectiveness of leadership and management

Good

- The headteacher and board of directors have high aspirations and, through constant evaluation of the school's work, continue to improve the provision for pupils. They have ensured that the school meets all the independent school standards.
- Leaders have created a secure and caring learning environment. Meeting the needs of the pupils is central to the school's work. As a result, there are strong relationships between staff, pupils and parents. Parents are extremely complimentary about the school, describing it as 'amazing', 'inclusive and accepting' and 'brilliant'.
- The school keeps detailed records of the individual needs of all pupils, based on a range of information. Education, health and care plans are well documented and used to plan pupils' learning programmes. Records of each pupil's behaviour and starting points are thorough and provide a good starting point to measure academic, social and emotional progress.
- Leaders have developed assessment methods since the previous inspection. The progress of pupils is carefully tracked. Strategies to support pupils who are not making sufficient progress are successful as they are based on accurate knowledge of the pupils' needs.
- Leaders have a good understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of provision. Improvement plans are focused on the right priorities. The board of directors appoint a group of well-qualified advisers to review the work of the school and support improvements.
- The curriculum as a whole is well planned and covers all the required areas of learning. Pupils follow a curriculum pathway that is matched to their needs. There is, rightly, a focus on developing pupils' ability to communicate, and all pupils, including those who are non-verbal, are encouraged to answer questions and express their opinions.
- Pupils study subjects such as science, history and geography through topics. These are based on the pupils' interests and their education, health and care plan targets. To supplement the subjects taught in school, pupils follow an off-site curriculum that supports their social and emotional development and encourages independence. There is a wide range of activities on offer ranging from climbing to equine studies. Pupils look forward to their off-site learning.
- The most able pupils follow the national curriculum in academic subjects. Detailed schemes for learning are produced to ensure pupils cover all curriculum topics. However, there is no clear oversight of how the curriculum is sequenced across key stages. As a result, it is not clear how teachers deepen pupils' understanding and skills in a subject as they progress through the school.
- Before pupils join the school, leaders work closely with families and other organisations to gather information that enables a smooth transition into school. Continued close working with support agencies makes sure the personal development needs of the pupils are met. The local authorities who place pupils in the school are extremely satisfied with the provision provided.

## Governance

- The board of directors are passionate about ensuring that the school meets the needs of the pupils. One director fulfils the role as chair of governors. He visits the school regularly and participates in senior staff meetings. As a result, he has a very accurate view of what is happening in the school and can ask questions about the impact of leaders' work on pupils' outcomes.
- Directors ensure that policies are reviewed regularly and meet the latest guidance. They fulfil their statutory safeguarding duties.
- The directors make good use of the advisory body to hold leaders to account. They ask challenging questions and provide effective support.

## Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- The school has a suitable safeguarding policy published on its website.
- The safety and well-being of the pupils is given the highest priority. Staff are aware of their duty to report any concerns about a child's well-being. Staff know the pupils well, so they are quick to identify any signs that may suggest a child is at risk. Records indicate that staff swiftly report any concerns, however minor.
- Leaders ensure that all the appropriate pre-employment checks are carried out on staff before they can work with pupils. This includes adults who deliver off-site activities. Staff are trained in the latest guidance.
- Leaders work well with families and outside agencies to assure the wellbeing of the pupils. Leaders ensure that child protection documents are of a high quality and kept secure. However, they are not as vigilant at making sure some of the administrative documents relating to safeguarding are kept up to date, for example staff training records.
- Regular premises checks ensure that the building is safe for pupils and staff. Risk assessments are robust documents and reviewed regularly.

## Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

**Good**

- Teachers know their pupils well. They use this knowledge and education health and care plan targets to plan interesting learning activities that meet the needs of individuals. As a result, most pupils are engaged in their learning and make at least good progress.
- Adults use questioning well to develop pupils' understanding and thinking skills. Teachers use the school's assessment policy effectively in order to record what pupils have achieved. Pupils are praised for their achievements and, as a result, they are motivated to do their best.
- Classrooms provide calm learning environments. Well-chosen resources are used effectively, to help pupils learn. Positive relationships between adults and pupils help pupils to develop their confidence as learners.
- Teaching assistants are skilful at supporting pupils with their learning. This is because

they receive relevant training and work closely with teachers.

- Lessons provide plenty of opportunities for pupils to develop their literacy skills, especially oracy. Writing skills are developed through many subjects as well as in English.
- Pupils develop confidence in using numbers to complete basic calculations. They also learn how to use mathematics in their daily lives and advance to problem-solving activities.
- In most lessons, pupils are set suitably challenging work and activities, for example following a set of visual and written instructions and preparing materials to make a model. However, there are occasions when adults do simple tasks for pupils. As a result, independence is hampered as pupils are not given the opportunity to manage their learning.
- The most able pupils are taught the national curriculum in a more formal style. They are expected to concentrate for longer periods on academic tasks. Most of the time pupils are set work that provides them with an appropriate level of challenge. However, at times pupils spend too long on familiar work rather than moving on to new learning.

## Personal development, behaviour and welfare

**Good**

### Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is outstanding. It provides a welcoming, secure nurturing environment for pupils who have education health and care plans. Many of these pupils have been removed from mainstream schools as they have been unable to cope, and for many of these pupils this resulted in challenging behaviour.
- Staff have an excellent understanding of the social and emotional barriers that affect pupils' behaviour and ability to form relationships. High-quality relationships, trust and suitable challenge from staff, who genuinely care about the pupils, contribute well to the personal development and well-being of individuals.
- Where there are emotional outbursts, all staff are highly skilled in de-escalating the problem. Because staff know the pupils well, staff are often able to pre-empt a situation and act to prevent it arising. There are many safe areas in the school, where pupils calm down and reflect. As pupils progress through the school their ability to manage their behaviour improves, leading to a decrease in emotional outbursts. Parents notice an improvement in their child's behaviour at home as well as in school.
- The school employs a care manager and a range of therapists, such as speech and language and occupational therapists. All pupils have access to these therapies either in class or as one-to-one provision. The care manager, a paediatric nurse, and therapists work well with outside agencies and support families to get any additional help pupils may need.
- Pupils are provided with a range of activities that support their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Pupils learn about different religions, raise money for their chosen charities, act in their own school drama and music productions and make a number of visits to their local community. Pupils produce their own weekly newsletter, and some of the topics covered include endangered animals, holocaust week, the war in Iraq and

Remembrance Day.

- Social and moral development, along with the fundamental British values, is a thread that runs throughout the work of the school. Adults model positive relationships and respect and tolerance for all. They are quick to correct unacceptable interactions between pupils. Through personal, social, health and economic education lessons (PSHEE), pupils explore topics such as 'different but equal'.
- Pupils know there is always someone to talk to. On several occasions, inspectors witnessed pupils asking staff if they could talk to them. Staff took the time to talk to pupils.
- The school's work with parents is highly effective and much appreciated by parents. Several parents said that all staff are approachable, that they listen to them and they are treated as equal partners in the care of their child. This comment by a parent sums up the views of almost all parents: 'My child attending Woodcroft is like a second change of life and fulfilling his potential.'

## Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good. Pupils respond well to classroom routines and reminders about acceptable behaviour. As a result, almost all pupils have positive attitudes towards their learning. Staff use praise and rewards effectively to encourage good behaviour.
- Behaviour logs indicate that staff respond to inappropriate behaviour quickly and effectively. As pupils learn to manage their behaviour, the number of incidents of unacceptable behaviour reduces. Bullying is rare and dealt with appropriately. Parents agree.
- Pupils' attendance is variable. Leaders give high priority to attendance and work with families and other agencies to ensure that poor attendance is not having a negative impact on learning. Many pupils with a history of poor attendance are now attending regularly because they enjoy school.

## Outcomes for pupils

**Good**

- All pupils are supported by education health and care plans. Skilled staff use these plans well to plan suitable learning activities. Pupils quickly feel secure and enjoy learning. As a result, pupils make excellent progress in their emotional and social development.
- As pupils settle into the school, they build up strong relationships with staff and realise they are there to help them. This helps to develop their confidence as learners and their concentration skills.
- Books and reading are a feature of most lessons. Pupils are provided with plenty of opportunities to look at books in order to develop their language and foster a love of stories. Creative story sessions are interactive, and the repetitive nature of the story enables pupils to join in and learn new words. Pupils who are able to read are encouraged to read a range of books.
- Pupils are making strong progress in mathematics because they are provided with the opportunity to secure their understanding of numbers and basic calculations through a range of activities. Pupils are encouraged to develop their reasoning skills through problem-solving activities. They also learn how to use their mathematics skills outside of

school, for example measuring ingredients using the correct weight and checking their change. The most able pupils are adequately challenged in mathematics.

- Inspectors saw some good progress in pupils' writing. Many pupils are now able to write sentences and paragraphs using basic punctuation. Pupils who are confident writers are encouraged to write at length. Some good examples of extended writing were seen in books.
- In science, pupils are given lots of opportunity to learn how to work scientifically through practical investigations. Pupils' books show good evidence of pupils making conclusions based on their findings. In one lesson, pupils were fascinated by the slugs and snails they had collected, and this led to pupils researching their needs and trying to meet them.
- Thorough transition arrangements that involve parents, the school and outside agencies enable pupils to move to secondary education as smoothly as possible. In their final year, pupils are very well supported in their preparation for secondary school as they are given more opportunities to take responsibility within the classroom and in decision-making.

## School details

Unique reference number	115425
DfE registration number	881/6031
Inspection number	10093909

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	Other independent special school
School category	Independent school
Age range of pupils	5 to 13
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	40
Number of part-time pupils	2
Proprietor	Woodcroft School Limited
Chair	Daniel Edwards
Headteacher	Brian Sainsbury
Annual fees (day pupils)	£59,590.48
Telephone number	020 8508 1369
Website	<a href="http://www.woodcroftschoo.net">www.woodcroftschoo.net</a>
Email address	<a href="mailto:brian@woodcroftschoo.net">brian@woodcroftschoo.net</a>
Date of previous inspection	22 to 24 June 2016

## Information about this school

- Woodcroft School is an independent special day school for pupils with complex learning and behavioural difficulties associated with varying degrees of autism spectrum disorder. It opened in 1963 and is owned by Woodcroft School Limited.
- The school's aim is to offer a safe and supportive environment, within which pupils can develop their full potential and live healthy, satisfying and independent lives within society.
- The school is registered to admit up to 50 boys and girls aged between 5 and 13 years. There are currently 42 pupils on roll. All pupils are supported by educational, health and



care plans relating to their complex needs. Most pupils have had a disrupted education, which has had an adverse impact on their achievements.

- The school's intake is ethnically diverse and no pupil is in the early stage of learning English.
- All pupils are referred by and funded by local authorities in and around London.

## Information about this inspection

- The inspectors visited all classes to observe learning and pupils' attitudes towards learning. They observed a range of lessons, including mathematics, English, science, cooking, sensory story and music. Inspectors were accompanied by the headteacher and deputy head.
- Inspectors scrutinised pupils' books to look at the quality of learning, and spoke to pupils about their learning.
- Meetings were held with the headteacher, deputy headteacher, the care manager and one of the directors.
- The inspectors scrutinised several documents related to safeguarding, health and safety, and risk assessments related to the school building, individual pupils and external visits. Schemes of work, pupils' progress documents, attendance records and behaviour logs were also viewed. The records of the checks made on staff's suitability to work with children were scrutinised.
- The views of parents were gathered from the 16 responses to Ofsted's online survey, Parent View, including four free-text responses. Inspectors also spoke to parents informally at the start of the school day.
- The views of 55 staff who completed the staff questionnaire were also considered by the inspectors.

## Inspection team

Caroline Parry, lead inspector	Ofsted Inspector
Kathryn Herlock	Ofsted Inspector

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