

# Inspection of Woodcroft School

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

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Inspection dates: 15 to 17 March 2022

## **Overall effectiveness**

## **Requires improvement**

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The quality of education

**Requires improvement**

Behaviour and attitudes

**Requires improvement**

Personal development

**Requires improvement**

Leadership and management

**Requires improvement**

Overall effectiveness at previous inspection

Good

Does the school meet the independent school standards?

**No**

## **What is it like to attend this school?**

Pupils are treated as individuals at Woodcroft School. Teachers are caring, make pupils feel safe and help and support them. Pupils like being with their friends in school. All parents who responded to Ofsted Parent View were positive about the care their child receives. All would recommend the school. As one parent stated, 'Top marks for such a wonderful school in such a beautiful, peaceful setting.'

Most pupils receive effective support to manage their day-to-day needs and behaviours. However, staff do not use the information available sufficiently well to help identify all the support required for pupils with the most complex needs. Some pupils' behaviour is not as well supported as it should be.

Pupils access some well-thought-through activities to help their social and emotional development. However, they do not access a well-designed curriculum in other areas of their learning. This means that they do not learn as well as they could.

Pupils told inspectors that they look forward to participating in outdoor activities. Looking after horses or digging the allotment provides pupils with a sense of responsibility and teamwork.

## **What does the school do well and what does it need to do better?**

Leaders' intentions for several aspects of the curriculum are not fully developed. In many subjects, leaders have provided staff with the broad themes that need to be covered. The essential knowledge that leaders want teachers to teach and pupils to learn is not identified. Teachers, some of whom are new to the school, rely upon their experience to include what they think the content of lessons should be. As a result, pupils receive a variable quality and quantity of learning.

The weakness in curriculum design is evident in the provision for pupils' personal development, specifically in the coverage of protected characteristics and preparation for adulthood. Staff are very creative in providing a range of opportunities to help pupils' development. However, this aspect of the curriculum lacks structure. It does not build pupils' knowledge about different faiths and cultures coherently. Pupils engage in lots of outdoor activities. This contributes to their understanding of cooperation and teamworking.

The curriculum is stronger where leaders have created bespoke support for pupils' social and emotional development. Leaders have invested in a range of specialist teams to support pupils' development. Teachers support pupils in the here and now, according to how pupils are feeling each day. As a result, many pupils are being well supported to develop better learning behaviours and interact with each other and their staff in a positive way.

Pupils arrive at school with significant speech, language and communication needs. For those at the earliest stages of language development, teachers plan small steps

of learning. They provide a range of stimulating activities to support pupils' early language development. Other pupils are in the early stages of learning to read. Teachers use effective strategies to teach pupils to read. Pupils enjoy reading. They read books to help them to practise the sounds and words that they know.

Leaders point to evidence of improvements in pupils' behaviour since arrival. There is a clear behaviour policy in place. However, leaders do not make sufficiently detailed checks on how well staff implement the school's behaviour policy. Some recording of behaviour incidents lacks detail about the triggers that led to poorer behaviour. Leaders are not well placed to identify what more could be done to improve pupils' behaviour. Pupils' individual risk assessments lack precise information in response to incidents. The number of incidents and use of restraint remains high for a few pupils.

Leaders and the proprietor body are committed to improving the life chances and experiences of pupils in their care. The COVID-19 pandemic and staffing changes have brought additional challenges in the last two years. Throughout this time, leaders and the proprietor body have made sure that the school has been a safe and secure environment for the most vulnerable pupils. However, strategic leadership monitoring, across a range of areas, including teaching and the curriculum, lacks precision and thoroughness.

The proprietor body is involved in everyday life at the school. The chair is a regular visitor. He has established an advisory committee to support governance and an internal multi-disciplinary team to discuss the quality of provision. Leaders lack precise systems for collecting all the information needed to effectively check improvements.

The proprietor body has not ensured that all the independent school standards are met. The curriculum is not well designed across subjects. Leaders have not identified what pupils will learn, in an appropriate way, about all the protected characteristics. Leaders' implementation of risk assessments does not help all pupils' behaviour to improve. The proprietor body has struggled to recruit staff to help with site maintenance. Some minor issues with site compliance were rectified during the inspection. The site is generally well maintained. However, leaders have identified that there are further improvements to be made in learning environments and sensory equipment. Plans are in place to address these aspects.

## **Safeguarding**

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders maintain detailed checks to ensure that adults are safe to work with children. Staff are well trained. They are knowledgeable about how to recognise the signs of concern. They use the school's child protection procedures to alert leaders to their concerns. Leaders use this information to provide the help and support pupils need. The amount of detail included in leaders' records does not always fully reflect all the work undertaken to keep pupils safe.

Leaders work with parents and pupils to help them understand the dangers of the internet and how to keep safe online.

## **What does the school need to do to improve?**

### **(Information for the school and proprietor)**

- In some subjects, leaders have not made clear the specific knowledge pupils need to know and understand to successfully build on previous learning. Leaders have not identified how subject knowledge should be sequenced and ordered. This means that teachers focus on activities rather than teaching and supporting pupils in learning and remembering essential knowledge. Leaders must ensure all their plans for the curriculum identify the subject knowledge pupils should learn and that teachers teach all subjects effectively.
- Leaders do not systematically check on how well teachers deliver the curriculum. This means that leaders do not know whether teachers have the confidence, knowledge and skills to teach each subject effectively. Leaders should ensure that they develop ways of checking how well the curriculum is taught.
- The information leaders collect about pupils, relating to accidents, behaviour and personal development is not always recorded in sufficient detail. Leaders do not have complete oversight of the incidents and events recorded to identify and support timely improvements in pupils' behaviour. They are not able to accurately analyse and evaluate records to find ways of supporting pupils and staff. Leaders need to ensure that the information recorded is used well to support staff appropriately in managing pupils' behaviour and the number of incidents are reduced.

## **How can I feed back my views?**

You can use [Ofsted Parent View](#) to give Ofsted your opinion on your child's school, or to find out what other parents and carers think. We use information from Ofsted Parent View when deciding which schools to inspect, when to inspect them and as part of their inspection.

The Department for Education has further [guidance](#) on how to complain about a school.

If you are the provider and you are not happy with the inspection or the report, you can [complain to Ofsted](#).

## School details

<b>Unique reference number</b>	115425
<b>DfE registration number</b>	881/6031
<b>Local authority</b>	Essex
<b>Inspection number</b>	10214262
<b>Type of school</b>	Other independent special school
<b>School category</b>	Independent school
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	5 to 14
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	46
<b>Number of part-time pupils</b>	0
<b>Proprietor</b>	Woodcroft School Limited
<b>Chair</b>	Daniel Edwards
<b>Headteacher</b>	Brian Sainsbury
<b>Annual fees (day pupils)</b>	£62,457.85
<b>Telephone number</b>	020 8508 1369
<b>Website</b>	<a href="http://www.woodcroftschoo.net">www.woodcroftschoo.net</a>
<b>Email address</b>	<a href="mailto:mail@woodcroftschoo.net">mail@woodcroftschoo.net</a>
<b>Date of previous inspection</b>	25 to 27 June 2019

## Information about this school

- Woodcroft is an independent special day school for pupils with complex learning and behavioural difficulties associated with varying degrees of autism spectrum disorder.
- The school is registered to admit up to 50 boys and girls aged between five and 13 years. All pupils are supported by education, health and care plans relating to their complex needs.
- All pupils are referred by and funded by local authorities in and around London.
- The school does not make any use of alternative provision.
- The school does not currently make use of any supply staff.
- At the previous inspection carried out in June 2019, the school was judged good, and all the independent school standards were met.

## Information about this inspection

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

The school has failed to meet the independent school standards. These are the requirements of the schedule to the Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014.

This was the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. Inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with the school and have taken that into account in their evaluation.

- Inspectors held meetings with a member of the proprietor body, who is also the chair of governors. Inspectors met the headteacher, curriculum leaders and teachers.
- Inspectors visited lessons, some jointly with school leaders. They looked closely at the quality of education in communication, including reading, mathematics, technology and art. Inspectors checked curriculum documentation, reviewed pupils' records of achievement and spoke with staff and pupils.
- Inspectors scrutinised school policy documents and records relating to safeguarding, including the single central record. They observed pupils' behaviour in lessons and at lunchtimes. They also reviewed records of behaviour and attendance and other information provided by school leaders.
- Inspectors took account of 10 responses to the survey for parents, Ofsted Parent View, and nine free-text responses. Inspectors also considered 48 responses to the online staff survey. There were no responses to Ofsted's online pupil survey.

## **Inspection team**

Steve Mellors, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

Declan McCarthy

Ofsted Inspector

## **Annex. Compliance with regulatory requirements**

### **The school failed to meet the following independent school standards**

#### **Part 1. Quality of education provided**

- 2(1) The standard in this paragraph is met if-
  - 2(1)(a) the proprietor ensures that a written policy on the curriculum, supported by appropriate plans and schemes of work, which provides for the matters specified in sub-paragraph (2) is drawn up and implemented effectively; and
  - 2(1)(b) the written policy, plans and schemes of work-
    - 2(1)(b)(i) take into account the ages, aptitudes and needs of all pupils, including those pupils with an EHC plan; and
    - 2(1)(b)(ii) do not undermine the fundamental British values of democracy, the rule of law, individual liberty, and mutual respect and tolerance of those with different faiths and beliefs.
- 2(2) For the purposes of paragraph (2)(1)(a), the matters are-
  - 2(2)(a) full-time supervised education for pupils of compulsory school age (construed in accordance with section 8 of the Education Act 1996), which gives pupils experience in linguistic, mathematical, scientific, technological, human and social, physical and aesthetic and creative education;
  - 2(2)(d) personal, social, health and economic education which-
    - 2(2)(d)(i) reflects the school's aim and ethos; and
    - 2(2)(d)(ii) encourages respect for other people, paying particular regard to the protected characteristics set out in the 2010 Act[9];
  - 2(2)(e) for pupils receiving secondary education, access to accurate, up-to-date careers guidance that-
    - 2(2)(e)(i) is presented in an impartial manner;
    - 2(2)(e)(ii) enables them to make informed choices about a broad range of career options; and
    - 2(2)(e)(iii) helps to encourage them to fulfil their potential;
  - 2(2)(h) that all pupils have the opportunity to learn and make progress; and



- 2(2)(i) effective preparation of pupils for the opportunities, responsibilities and experiences of life in British society.
- 2A(1) The standard in this paragraph is met if the proprietor-
  - 2A(1)(a) ensures that every registered pupil who is provided with primary education at the school is provided with relationships education.
- 3 The standard in this paragraph is met if the proprietor ensures that the teaching at the school-
  - 3(a) enables pupils to acquire new knowledge and make good progress according to their ability so that they increase their understanding and develop their skills in the subjects taught;
  - 3(c) involves well planned lessons and effective teaching methods, activities and management of class time;
  - 3(d) shows a good understanding of the aptitudes, needs and prior attainments of the pupils, and ensures that these are taken into account in the planning of lessons;
  - 3(e) demonstrates good knowledge and understanding of the subject matter being taught;
  - 3(f) utilises effectively classroom resources of a good quality, quantity and range;
  - 3(g) demonstrates that a framework is in place to assess pupils' work regularly and thoroughly and use information from that assessment to plan teaching so that pupils can progress.
- 4 The standard in this paragraph is met where the proprietor ensures that a framework for pupil performance to be evaluated, by reference to the school's own aims as provided to parents or national norms, or to both, is in place.

## **Part 2. Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils**

- 5(b)(vi) encourage respect for other people, paying particular regard to the protected characteristics set out in the 2010 Act.

## **Part 3. Welfare, health and safety of pupils**

- 16 The standard in this paragraph is met if the proprietor ensures that-
  - 16(a) the welfare of pupils at the school is safeguarded and promoted by the drawing up and effective implementation of a written risk assessment policy; and
  - 16(b) appropriate action is taken to reduce risks that are identified.

## **Part 8. Quality of leadership in and management of schools**

- 34(1) The standard about the quality of leadership and management is met if the proprietor ensures that persons with leadership and management responsibilities at the school-
  - 34(1)(a) demonstrate good skills and knowledge appropriate to their role so that the independent school standards are met consistently;
  - 34(1)(b) fulfil their responsibilities effectively so that the independent school standards are met consistently; and
  - 34(1)(c) actively promote the well-being of pupils.

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