

Inspection of Woodbury School

Hellier Road, Wolverhampton WV10 8ED

Inspection dates: 10 to 12 May 2022

Overall effectiveness **Good**

The quality of education **Good**

Behaviour and attitudes **Requires improvement**

Personal development **Good**

Leadership and management **Good**

Overall effectiveness at previous inspection Good

Does the school meet the independent school standards? **Yes**

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils who have found it hard to cope in other schools get a second chance at this school. Leaders and staff help them to believe in themselves and what they can do. Most pupils respond well to this, although some do not attend often enough.

In the mornings, pupils study academic subjects, including English and mathematics, and work towards qualifications. In the afternoons, they do practical activities and learn useful life skills such as cooking and how to use tools. This mix of activities prepares them well for life beyond school.

Pupils are kept safe at this school. This is because staff keep a very close watch on them. They look out for any instances of bullying or poor behaviour and step in quickly if it happens.

Challenging behaviour does happen. Leaders know how to manage this and make their expectations clear. Even so, the way staff respond to some of the things pupils say could be better.

Pupils and staff have a say in shaping school life. If anyone raises a concern, then leaders listen and follow it up properly.

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

Pupils come to this school because they have had problems in other schools. Most find it hard to manage their behaviour and have usually missed a lot of education. At Woodbury, staff support them to get back into learning. Most pupils respond well to this. However, some continue to miss too much school. Some say unkind or inappropriate words. When this happens, staff notice and respond. However, some staff are not sure about the right things to say, or how to manage some situations in the best way. Leaders know this and are already taking action to support staff with this aspect of their work.

New leadership is already making its mark. Leaders have found out about the school's existing strengths and are building on these. Furthermore, they have brought new ideas about the curriculum, and have ambitions to increase the range of qualifications on offer. Leaders' optimism and drive, often in the face of significant challenges, are the reasons why the school has been judged to be good overall. There is compelling evidence that leaders are securing improvements.

English and mathematics are taught every day. In both these subjects, the curriculum is well organised, and staff have good subject knowledge. Pupils who need help with reading get the right sort of support. The school has age-appropriate phonics resources in place, and there is a systematic approach across different age groups. Furthermore, pupils have a reading time every day. During these sessions, pupils either read by themselves or listen to an adult reading to them. In both

English and mathematics, pupils work towards functional skills or GCSE qualifications.

In most other subjects, the curriculum is equally well planned. However, aspects of the school's personal, social, health and economic (PSHE) education are still being developed. Informed guidance is in place, but staff are still getting to grips with it. That said, the school does take pupils out and about in order to broaden their horizons. For example, pupils have visited Liverpool docks, a local farm and historical sites. Next week, pupils are going to the theatre to watch a play based on a book they are studying.

Leaders have set very clear expectations about pupils' behaviour. They have introduced five non-negotiable rules that pupils must follow. They remind pupils about these every day. Pupils have mixed responses to this, and challenging behaviour does happen. Staff are trained in the use of restraint. They use and record it correctly when needs be. Pupils are satisfied with the way staff manage this. They realise that it is only used as a last resort and to keep them and others safe.

The school's arrangements for handling complaints work as they should. Whenever a complaint is received, leaders investigate and follow it up thoroughly. They share information with the right people and keep careful records of everything that is done in response. When needs be, independent organisations have visited to check on safety. For example, in response to one anonymous concern, the fire service visited to check out the school's fire safety arrangements. This thoroughness and attention to detail are typical of leaders' approach to checking on any concerns that arise.

Staff say that they think the school is run well and that they feel supported by leaders. They get feedback about their work and say that leaders listen to their ideas.

The proprietor maintains keen oversight of the school. It regularly checks how well the school is meeting the independent school standards and ensures compliance with legal duties.

The school site is secure and well maintained. There is sufficient indoor and outdoor space. Classrooms are suitable for their intended purposes. A specialist woodwork room is kept tidy and safe, with checks on the tools that are stored securely inside. First aid is available when needed. Pupils are supervised at all times during the day. They are not allowed to bring mobile phones on site.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Staff are informed about local risks and know what to do if they have any concerns. If pupils do not turn up for school, staff find out where they are. If needs be, they make home visits to check on their well-being.

All the correct checks on staff are carried out and recorded correctly. Records are kept in a secure password-protected electronic format. Leaders have set up an independent whistle-blowing call line so staff have an additional route for reporting any concerns.

Staff and pupils say that the school is a safe place. Inspection evidence supports these views.

What does the school need to do to improve? (Information for the school and proprietor)

- Some pupils say unkind or inappropriate words. Some use the wrong words to describe some of the things that happen in school. The way staff respond to this varies. Some staff say they are not sure about what to do or say in some situations. Leaders should remind all staff about the school's expectations and provide more training so that all staff have the knowledge and confidence to respond in the right way. They should do this so that, over time, pupils learn that offensive language or describing actions with the wrong words is not acceptable.
- The attendance of some pupils is low. Some have found it hard to return to school after the COVID-19 pandemic restrictions. They are missing education and not getting the help that they need. Leaders should continue to work with other professionals to support these pupils back to school. They should do this so that pupils do not fall further behind.

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

Unique reference number	145059
DfE registration number	336/6005
Local authority	Wolverhampton
Inspection number	10225330
Type of school	Other independent special school
School category	Independent school
Age range of pupils	7 to 18
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	25
Number of part-time pupils	0
Proprietor	Horizon Care and Education Group
Chair	Amanda Cunningham
Headteacher	Edward Barnes
Annual fees (day pupils)	£49,500 to £100,000
Telephone number	01902 507052
Website	www.horizoncare.co.uk/schools/woodbury-school
Email address	enquiries@horizoncare.co.uk
Date of previous inspection	25 to 27 September 2018

Information about this school

- Woodbury School is an independent special school that caters for pupils with social, emotional and mental health difficulties. All pupils have an education, health and care plan. Pupils are referred to the school by local authorities. Most pupils have a history of interrupted schooling due to exclusion.
- The school is part of the Horizon Care and Education Group, which operates specialist education and care settings across the country.
- Currently, the school does not use any alternative providers. Leaders plan to start using three Ofsted registered alternative providers from September 2022. The school uses local sports venues for physical education.
- The school's last full inspection was in September 2018, when it was judged to be good. In December 2019 and March 2021, Ofsted carried out unannounced emergency inspections. In both these inspections, the school met all the independent school standards that were checked.

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 meets the independent school standards. These are the requirements set out in 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 leaders and have taken that into account in their evaluation.

- This inspection considered concerns sent to the Department for Education. The inspection found that leaders were aware of the complaints raised. This is because the same complaints have been sent to the school and to other places, including a local care home, a different school and the fire service. Inspectors found that school leaders have investigated the concerns thoroughly and have involved other professionals. There is a collective view by leaders and Wolverhampton local authority that the complaints are part of a targeted campaign. They have passed some information about this to the police. Inspectors found no evidence to substantiate the concerns raised. In December 2019 and March 2021, Ofsted carried out emergency inspections in response to similar complaints. Neither of those inspections found any evidence to substantiate the complaints received.
- The inspectors met with the headteacher, other leaders, staff and pupils. The lead inspector spoke with Horizon Group's chief executive officer, the quality and risk

management director and the education operations director. He also spoke with Wolverhampton local authority's designated safeguarding officer.

- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: English, mathematics, technology and PSHE. In these subjects, inspectors looked at curriculum guidance, visited lessons, looked at work and talked to staff and pupils. Inspectors also looked at guidance and work in some other subjects.
- Inspectors looked at the school's website and examined several documents. These included school policies and records relating to safeguarding, the curriculum, complaints, health and safety, pupils' behaviour and attendance. Inspectors considered the responses to Ofsted's surveys of staff's, pupils' and parents' views.
- Inspectors checked the single central record of employment checks on staff and looked at pupils' records. Inspectors met with all staff and asked them about safeguarding matters and workplace culture. The lead inspector also gave staff an Ofsted email address and a phone number to use if they wished to share information by these routes. Inspectors also talked with pupils about safeguarding matters.
- Inspectors examined the school's records of how leaders had responded to safeguarding concerns.
- The lead inspector checked that the premises complied with the independent school standards.
- Inspectors observed pupils' behaviour and levels of supervision throughout the day.

Inspection team

Martin Pye, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

Jane Edgerton

Ofsted Inspector

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