

Inspection of a good school: Woodlands

Packington Lane, Coleshill, Birmingham, West Midlands B46 3JE

Inspection dates:

17 and 18 May 2022

Outcome

There has been no change to this school's overall judgement of good as a result of this initial (section 8) inspection. However, the evidence gathered suggests that the inspection grade might not be as high if a full inspection were carried out now. The next inspection will therefore be a full (section 5) inspection.

What is it like to attend this school?

Woodlands is a happy school. One comment made by a parent expressed the views of many others: 'I am happy he goes to Woodlands, and I know he is too.' Staff care for the pupils. This begins at the start of the day when they welcome pupils into school with a warm smile.

Staff teach pupils how to manage their behaviour successfully. Pupils learn about safe and unsafe behaviour. As a result, the school is calm and orderly. If pupils are unkind to each other, they know that staff will sort it out quickly.

Leaders are ambitious for the pupils and what they can achieve. This starts in Reception when staff talk to children about what they want to be when they grow up. Staff teach pupils how to become responsible, active citizens. They do this by giving pupils responsibilities in the classroom, such as emptying the recycling bins.

Pupils study a range of subjects. They make good progress in most subjects. However, teachers lack sufficient subject knowledge in some subjects. This means that sometimes the advice they give to pupils to improve their learning is not precise enough. This limits pupils' progress.

Pupils value the many activities and trips the school offers. This includes looking after the animals or growing vegetables at the farm. Students in the sixth form have benefited from a residential trip to Devon. Other pupils have taken part in a music performance at Birmingham Town Hall.

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

Leaders think carefully about the subjects that pupils follow. They consider how they can prepare pupils for adult life, including getting the qualifications they need. Leaders also consider carefully how to teach pupils the life skills to be independent.

Pupils follow a wide range of subjects. Where subjects are well planned and sequenced, pupils can remember what they have learned in the past and apply this knowledge well. For example, in mathematics, pupils can successfully apply their calculation skills. They work out how much it will cost to cook a recipe and how many portions they will need to sell to make a profit. However, not all subjects are as well planned. In some subjects, it is not clear what the key knowledge and skills pupils will learn and revisit over time. In addition, teachers' subject knowledge is variable. This means that teachers sometimes miss opportunities to correct pupils' mistakes. The feedback teachers give to pupils to improve their learning is not always precise enough.

Leaders understand the importance of pupils being able to read. All staff have recently had training in a new reading programme. The teaching of reading starts in early years and continues throughout the school. Adults bring books to life. For example, in one lesson, staff created a mock snowstorm for pupils who were reading 'We're Going on a Bear Hunt'. As a result, pupils are developing a love of reading.

Developing communication is a strength of the school. Staff use appropriate resources well. These include the use of a range of communication aids that closely match pupils' needs. As a result, all pupils contribute to their annual reviews.

The learning environment is purposeful. All classrooms have a range of high-quality resources. In Reception, for example, children particularly enjoy their outdoor learning space.

Pupils receive a high quality of pastoral care. Staff know their pupils well. The pastoral team works effectively with several external agencies. This means that adults quickly recognise if a pupil has an unmet need, and they put the appropriate support in place. This is making a difference. For example, more pupils are now able to successfully manage their own behaviour.

Leaders support pupils to develop in many diverse aspects of life. Pupils raise money for charities including 'Jeans for Genes Day'. This helps them to celebrate difference. The provision of play equipment and fitness equipment on the playgrounds helps pupils to be physical healthy. Older pupils know that using the hand bike will help to build their arm muscles.

Leaders prepare pupils well for their next stage. Pupils meet people from a range of occupations. For example, a beekeeper and the police have recently visited the primary pupils. Older pupils have travelled on the train to Birmingham city centre. The school celebrates national events. This includes national careers week when pupils learn about apprenticeships, internships and college life. As a result, all pupils due to leave school at the end of the year are moving on to education, employment or training.

Leaders consider staff workload and well-being. Leaders regularly provide staff with a staff welfare questionnaire. Staff know that leaders will respond to this. They say the new headteacher 'gets things done'. As a result, staff morale is high.

The trust provides effective support to the school. The senior leadership team values the advice and guidance it receives from an experienced leader from within the trust. Trustees provide the school with an appropriate balance of support and challenge. For example, in one meeting they asked leaders to report to them on the progress disadvantaged pupils were making.

In discussion with the headteacher, the inspectors agreed that looking at how well the curriculum is planned and sequenced across all subjects, and how well teachers are using assessment to embed pupils' knowledge, may usefully serve as a focus for the next inspection.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Staff take pupils' welfare seriously. They quickly report any concerns so that appropriate action can be taken. Leaders provide all staff with regular training. The effective links pastoral leaders have developed with a range of external agencies mean that pupils and their families get the help they need when they need it.

Pupils know how to keep themselves safe through the curriculum and assemblies. Pupils have an online safety council. They provide effective support and advice to their peers. Consequently, pupils say they feel safe. Parents agree.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Not all subjects are coherently planned and sequenced. Pupils do not do as well as they could in some subjects. Leaders should ensure that the curriculum is well planned in all subjects so that pupils cumulatively develop the knowledge and skills they need for future learning. Leaders should support teachers with its implementation.
- Teachers do not use assessment well enough across all subjects. Sometimes, they miss opportunities to address misconceptions. Feedback to pupils at times lacks precision. This hinders pupils' progress. Leaders need to improve teachers' subject and pedagogical content knowledge in order to improve their use of assessment.

Background

When we have judged a school to be good, we will then normally go into the school about once every four years to confirm that the school remains good. This is called a section 8 inspection of a good or outstanding school, because it is carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. We do not give graded judgements on a section 8 inspection. However, if we find evidence that a school would now receive a higher or lower grade, then the next inspection will be a section 5 inspection. Usually this is within one to two years of the date of the section 8 inspection. If we have serious concerns about safeguarding, behaviour or the quality of education, we will deem the section 8 inspection as a section 5 inspection immediately.

This is the second section 8 inspection since we judged the predecessor school, Woodlands, to be good in February 2013.

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

Further information

You can search for [published performance information](#) about the school.

In the report, '[disadvantaged pupils](#)' refers to those pupils who attract government pupil premium funding: pupils claiming free school meals at any point in the last six years and pupils in care or who left care through adoption or another formal route.

School details

Unique reference number	145224
Local authority	Warwickshire
Inspection number	10227742
Type of school	Special
School category	Academy special converter
Age range of pupils	4 to 19
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in sixth-form provision	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	217
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	15
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Eithne Lee
Headteacher	Sue Backhouse
Website	www.woodlands.warwickshire.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Information about this school

- Woodlands school converted to become an academy in December 2017. At this time, it joined the Unity multi-academy company (MAT). When its predecessor school, Woodlands School, was last inspected by Ofsted, it was judged to be good.
- The school does not use any alternative providers.
- A new headteacher, who was previously the deputy headteacher, was appointed in April 2022.

Information about this inspection

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

- The inspectors met with the headteacher, chief executive officer, a trustee, a representative of the Unity MAT, other leaders, staff and pupils.
- The inspectors carried out deep dives in reading, mathematics, personal, social and health education, and citizenship. For each deep dive, the inspectors discussed the curriculum with subject leaders, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers, spoke to some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work.
- The lead inspector also visited lessons in other subjects.
- The inspectors talked to pupils at unstructured times during the day.
- The inspectors evaluated a range of school documents and looked at information on the school's website.
- The lead inspector checked the single central record and met with the school's safeguarding leaders.
- The inspectors reviewed the responses to Ofsted's pupil and staff survey. They also considered the responses to the online questionnaire, Ofsted Parent View, including free-text responses.

Inspection team

Lesley Yates, lead inspector

Ofsted Inspector

Amjid Zaman

Ofsted Inspector

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