

# Inspection of an outstanding school: Woodlands School

Bransgrove Road, Edgware, Middlesex HA8 6JP

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Inspection dates:

17 and 18 October 2023

## **Outcome**

Woodlands School continues to be an outstanding school.

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

Governors, staff and parents and carers describe this community special school as a family. The levels of care, support and encouragement that all staff provide for pupils and their parents are exemplary. These make for an incredibly happy, purposeful and safe environment in which all pupils can thrive.

The school is determined to enable pupils to succeed and lead meaningful lives. These aspirations are met. The school provides every pupil with all the support and opportunities that they need. The bespoke curriculum, therapies and enrichment opportunities provided for each pupil are of excellent quality. The school's approach to developing pupils' social and emotional skills, results in brilliant behaviour around the school. Staff give quick and effective support to any pupil who gets upset or anxious.

The school's work in raising pupils' awareness of and participation in wider society is exemplary. Once a week, pupils from the adjacent mainstream school come over. Pupils from the two schools play together. Pupils from another mainstream school come in to do joint para-dancing. Furthermore, from Reception onwards, staff take pupils into the local community, every week. For example, pupils are taught how to shop and take public transport.

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

The school has developed an extremely ambitious curriculum. Leaders have thoroughly considered what they want pupils to know and remember. They take into account the different pathways that groups of pupils with distinctive needs need to follow. The knowledge identified for pupils to learn is broken down into small steps along each pathway. Teaching staff then make further adaptations to resourcing and teaching activities. These address each pupil's individualised targets. Therapists work closely with teaching staff to the benefit of pupils. They too have joint input in defining and reviewing pupil's individualised targets so that pupils learn successfully.

The school has embedded strong approaches to checking on pupils' knowledge. Staff use the information effectively to inform extra support as needed. Teaching and support staff gain much from frequent joint training sessions. Staff meet colleagues in other special schools. They share strong practice and evaluate each other's work. This gives staff the expertise to deliver a high-quality curriculum and support to all pupils. They also make excellent use of a wide range of teaching resources. This includes the seven outdoor learning areas. As a result, pupils' achievements are exceptionally strong.

The school makes the teaching of communication and reading a top priority. All staff have the expertise to teach and apply the range of communication strategies consistently across the school. This enables pupils to express themselves and make independent choices. Staff are also well trained in the school's phonics programme. It is taught from the start of Reception. Based on staff's understanding of each pupil's developmental needs, pupils are taught to decode and blend sounds together to read words. Increasingly, pupils reach a point of reading with some confidence and fluency. Throughout the day, there are planned reading opportunities. These range from sensory stories to non-fiction texts, rhymes and poetry.

The school also makes teaching of behaviour a key priority. Right from day one in Reception, staff set high expectations and routines. The behaviour team works closely with the rest of the staff. Together, they support all pupils in a variety of bespoke ways to learn to routinely behave well. This makes a strong contribution to pupils' success, as by behaving well and paying attention, they focus on gaining new knowledge and skills. The school does excellent work with parents and external agencies to overcome barriers to pupils attending school regularly.

The school provides pupils with an extensive range of enrichment activities. Some pupils take in a primary Shakespeare project. They learn to perform part of a play, and then join up together with pupils in other schools in a live performance of the entire play. Visitors work with pupils on special projects, like how to build bridges. This is then followed up with a trip to Wembley stadium. Theatres and ballet performers visit the school. All pupils also receive adapted tennis lessons. The whole-school community comes together for a cultural celebration every year. Diverse foods, music and dances are shared and enjoyed.

Subject and behaviour leaders share their expertise widely. For instance, they work with colleagues in a local feeder nursery school. They also collaborate with their counterparts in the secondary school to which most pupils transfer. Year 6 pupils attend the secondary school for one day a week. These arrangements ensure that most pupils experience seamless continuity as they transition to and from the school.

Much of the school's unique work on the curriculum and behaviour strategies have been shared widely, including through providing expert training to several local schools.

The school has set up a staff well-being committee who liaise with senior leaders. They have agreed various ways of streamlining working practices to reduce unnecessary workload. They also arrange a lot of collegiate well-being activities, like early morning yoga. Staff also said that they appreciate the extensive opportunities they have for career progression.

## Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

## Background

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

This is the second ungraded inspection since we judged the school to be outstanding in June 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.

## Further information

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

In the report, 'disadvantaged pupils' is used to mean pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND); pupils who meet the [definition of children in need of help and protection](#); pupils receiving statutory local authority support from a social worker; and pupils who otherwise meet the criteria used for deciding the school's [pupil premium funding](#) (this includes pupils claiming free school meals at any point in the last six years, looked after children (children in local authority care) and/or children who left care through adoption or another formal route).

## School details

<b>Unique reference number</b>	133316
<b>Local authority</b>	Harrow
<b>Inspection number</b>	10268979
<b>Type of school</b>	Primary
<b>School category</b>	Community special
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	4 to 11
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Gender of pupils in sixth-form provision</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	136
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair of governing body</b>	Naomi Green
<b>Headteacher</b>	Caroline Day-Lewis
<b>Website</b>	<a href="http://www.woodlands.harrow.sch.uk">www.woodlands.harrow.sch.uk</a>
<b>Date of previous inspection</b>	6 February 2018, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

## Information about this school

- There have been some changes to the school's leadership since the time of the previous inspection. The headteacher took up her post in September 2020. The chair of the governing body took on this role in September 2022.
- All pupils have education, health and care plans. The school caters for pupils with autism spectrum disorders, severe learning difficulties, and profound and multiple learning difficulties. Many pupils have associated speech, language and communication needs.
- The school does not make use of any alternative provision.

## Information about this inspection

- Inspections are a point-in-time judgement about the quality of a school's education provision.

- 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 of the school.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: reading and communication, science and personal, social, health and economic education. For each deep dive, inspectors held discussions about the curriculum, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers, spoke to some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work. Inspectors also considered other subjects as part of the inspection.
- Inspectors spoke with the headteacher and other senior leaders. They also spoke with the chair of the governing body and four other governors. In addition, they spoke with two representatives of the local authority.
- To evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding, the inspectors: reviewed the single central record; took account of the views of leaders, staff and pupils; and considered the extent to which the school has created an open and positive culture around safeguarding that puts pupils' interests first.
- Inspectors reviewed a range of documentation, including looking at records of pupils' behaviour. Inspectors also had formal meetings with staff and with pupils.
- Inspectors took account of the responses to the Ofsted Parent View survey. They spoke with parents informally who were waiting to pick up their children. Inspectors also considered the responses to the staff survey.

### **Inspection team**

David Radomsky, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

Mark Jordan

Ofsted Inspector

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