

Inspection of Woodlands

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

Inspection dates: 28 and 29 November 2023

Overall effectiveness	Requires improvement
The quality of education	Requires improvement
Behaviour and attitudes	Good
Personal development	Good
Leadership and management	Good
Early years provision	Good
Sixth-form provision	Good
Previous inspection grade	Good

The headteacher of this school is Sue Backhouse. This school is part of Unity MAT, which means other people in the trust also have responsibility for running the school. The trust is run by the chief executive officer, Tracy Pearce, and overseen by a board of trustees, chaired by Jon Dews.

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils are welcomed to Woodlands with warm greetings and smiles. Pupils are happy to come into school. They are excited about the day ahead. Staff know the pupils very well. As a result, pupils' individual needs are well understood and catered for.

Preparing pupils for their next destinations is very important here. Leaders want pupils to be well prepared for when they leave school. Pupils are given a range of opportunities to build their knowledge and skills for the future. These opportunities include regular visits to a local farm. As part of their visits, pupils collect eggs and sell them to raise money. They grow vegetables to make food. Furthermore, the range of qualifications pupils can study are also increasing.

Relationships between staff and pupils are positive, respectful and caring. Staff understand how pupils' behaviours are a way of communicating to them. They take time to understand what pupils need and quickly put effective support in place.

The school is ambitious for what pupils can achieve. Leaders are driving improvements across school. They are creating a new curriculum to support their ambitious aims for pupils. However, most of the foundation subjects are still in the early stages of development. Leaders recognise this means pupils are not learning as well as they could in all areas of the curriculum.

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

This is an exciting time for Woodlands. There have been many positive changes. Since the last inspection, there has been a drive to improve the curriculum. New leaders have been appointed, including subject leaders. The school prioritised improvements in English, mathematics and phonics. As a result, many pupils achieve well in these areas.

In the foundation subjects, the curriculum is less developed. Leaders know what needs to be done to improve these subjects. At this point in time, leaders are working together to identify the essential knowledge they want pupils to learn and in what order. In subjects where the curriculum is more developed, lessons are delivered clearly most of the time. However, there is some inconsistency in the way the new curriculum is being delivered across the school. Some subject leaders are new to their role. They do not yet have the knowledge and skills to check how well pupils are learning in their subject area.

All pupils have an education, health and care (EHC) plan. These cover a broad range of special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). The school accurately identify pupils' needs. These needs are reviewed regularly. Pupils and children in the early years are taught how to communicate using a range of strategies. This includes signing and using visual aids. Staff use these mostly consistent during classroom learning. Pupils can communicate their thoughts and needs to others. The

school deliver very effective focused lessons to support attention, communication and interactions.

Leaders have a sharp focus on improving the culture of reading across school. Staff are passionate about teaching reading. The school have prioritised all staff to receive training in phonics. A new phonics programme has recently been implemented. Leaders assess pupils regularly. Systems are in place to identify pupils who are falling behind. Support is put in place quickly for them. Older pupils at the early stages of reading receive support to become fluent readers. Pupils at the pre-reading stage are taught how to identify and respond to sounds and rhythms. All this means that pupils are quickly learning to read and find joy in books.

Behaviour across school is mostly calm and orderly. Pupils have a clear routine to their day. Pupils respond positively to this. They are eager to share their work with visitors. Pupils know the school rules of 'ready, respectful and safe'. They mostly understand why this is important.

The school has an appropriately planned offer in place to promote careers information, education, advice and guidance. Pupils share their aspirations for their future. Staff listen and work closely with pupils and parents to support them. Some pupils access extra learning in mainstream settings. This includes a range of qualifications in English and mathematics.

Pupils have a broad range of additional opportunities. For example, pupils attend after-school clubs. These include a music group and various sports clubs. In addition, pupils experience residential visits that help to build their resilience and independence. For many pupils, this is the first time away from their homes. Pupils know that exercise is healthy. They know about different types of relationships. They have an appropriate understanding about consent.

School leaders and trust leaders are dedicated to improving the school further. They know and support the changes needed to drive the curriculum forward.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- A new curriculum has been implemented recently in some subjects. There is some inconsistency in how these subjects are being delivered across school. This slows pupils' learning. The school should ensure that all curriculum areas are implemented consistently well across all phases.

- Many of the foundation subjects are in the early stages of development. The school has not identified the essential component knowledge they want pupils to learn and in what order. This means that pupils are not building their knowledge over time in a logical order. The school should ensure that they clearly identify the specific knowledge they want pupils to learn and remember in each subject.
- Some subject leaders are new to their role. They do not yet have the necessary knowledge and skills to evaluate the impact of their subject area on pupils' learning. This means they do not have an accurate understanding of how well pupils are learning. The school needs to ensure that new subject leaders are supported to develop their expertise in leading their curriculum areas effectively.

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

Unique reference number	145224
Local authority	Warwickshire
Inspection number	10268097
Type of school	Special
School category	Academy special converter
Age range of pupils	2 to 19
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in sixth-form provision	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	216
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	37
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Jon Dews
Headteacher	Sue Backhouse
Website	www.woodlands.warwickshire.sch.uk
Dates of previous inspection	17 and 18 May 2022, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The school has undergone several changes since the last inspection. Two deputy headteachers and two assistant headteachers were appointed. Two deputy headteachers and one assistant headteacher were promoted from within the school. There have also been significant changes to the middle leadership structure.
- The school is part of Unity multi-academy trust.
- All pupils have an EHC plan. These plans cover a broad range of SEND. These are mostly autism, communication and interaction, severe learning difficulties, moderate learning difficulties and other complex needs. Pupils also have additional needs, such as sensory and medical needs.
- There were no two-year-olds on the school roll during the time of the inspection.
- The school uses one registered alternative provider.

- The school operates from two sites. The second site is at The Coleshill School, Coventry Road, Coleshill, Birmingham, B46 3EX.
- The school meets the requirements of the provider access legislation, which requires schools to provide pupils in Years 8 to 13 with information and engagement about approved technical education qualifications and apprenticeships.

Information about this inspection

The inspectors carried out this graded inspection under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

- ☒ Inspections are a point-in-time judgement about the quality of a school's education provision.
- ☒ This was the second routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. Inspectors discussed any continued impact of the pandemic with the school and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- ☒ The inspectors met with the headteacher, deputy headteachers, assistant headteachers, chair of trust, additional representatives from the trust, subject leaders, teachers and pupils. They also talked informally with parents, carers, transport escorts, drivers and staff.
- ☒ The lead inspector spoke with two representatives of the local authority.
- ☒ The lead inspector spoke with a school improvement partner employed by the trust.
- ☒ Inspectors carried out deep dives in early reading, communication, English, mathematics, history and personal, social and health education. For each deep dive, inspectors discussed the curriculum with areas of learning leaders, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers, spoke to pupils about their learning, and looked at samples of pupils' work. Inspectors also looked at additional areas of learning.
- ☒ Inspectors looked at a sample of pupils' EHC plans.
- ☒ The lead inspector observed pupils reading to a familiar adult.
- ☒ Inspectors spoke to groups of pupils formally and informally about their learning and experiences at school.
- ☒ Inspectors observed informal times to evaluate safeguarding and pupils' behaviour.
- ☒ Safeguarding documents were reviewed, including the checks that leaders make on staff's suitability to work with children. The inspectors examined how staff implement safeguarding policies and procedures effectively across the school. They also considered the extent to which the school has created an open and positive culture around safeguarding that puts pupils' interests first.
- ☒ Inspectors considered responses to the online questionnaire for parents, Ofsted Parent View. This included free-text comments. Inspectors also looked at responses to Ofsted's online staff survey.

☒ Inspectors looked at a range of documentation provided by the school. This included the school’s self-evaluation, school policies, curriculum documents and SEND records.

Inspection team

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