

Inspection of a good school: Woolley Wood School

Chaucer Road, Sheffield, South Yorkshire S5 9QN

Inspection dates:

30 April and 1 May 2024

Outcome

Woolley Wood School continues to be a good school.

What is it like to attend this school?

Most pupils cannot wait to get off the buses as they arrive at school. They smile, giggle and wave to the staff, who are waiting to help them to their classrooms at the beginning of the day. Parents and carers, spoken to during the inspection, agreed unanimously that their children enjoy attending the school.

Staff and leaders have high expectations, seeing past pupils' special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) and focusing on their ability to be successful. Teachers enable their pupils to be independent, bold and brave, and to have a go at new activities.

Working in the forest school is a favourite activity of many pupils. Activities include identifying trees by their leaves, swinging on rope swings and hiding in hammocks. Pupils' confidence and self-esteem are developed in the forest. They are stretched to develop new knowledge and skills.

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

Strong relationships exist between staff, pupils and families. Staff have a very clear understanding of pupils' needs, likes and dislikes. This information is used effectively in order to tailor a challenging but bespoke curriculum for individual pupils. Developing communication, reading and language skills are priorities for the school. All pupils, including those who are pre-verbal, make progress in communicating with others.

The school's new phonics scheme is delivered regularly. Staff and pupils enjoy phonics sessions and participate with enthusiasm. Although, early reading skills are nurtured, assessment in phonics is inconsistent.

The curriculum is carefully crafted and sequenced to meet the needs of individual pupils. Targets from pupils' individual education plans are an intrinsic part of the curriculum.

Pupils are delighted to share their work and are extremely proud of their learning and progress.

Personal, social and health education (PSHE) is taught competently. Age-appropriate relationships and sex education is delivered well through the PSHE curriculum. Pupils access spiritual, moral, social and cultural education through the PSHE curriculum and through educational visits to a range of different places of worship. Pupils respect others from different cultures and faiths.

Pupils benefit from the physical education (PE) curriculum. The school ensures that pupils' achievements are showcased. For example, during the inspection, some pupils practised their dance in preparation for a performance at the Crucible Theatre. Another group learned to exercise safely on the trampoline. Both groups enjoyed their learning, and they concentrated and participated exceptionally well.

Children in early years explore, practise and experience a wide range of learning activities. Water-play, mark-making and exploring different textures and colours are everyday activities planned thoughtfully by staff. Children's social skills are developed thoroughly by learning to take turns and by practising moving around calmly and quietly. Staff, including therapy staff, work closely in early years. This collaborative approach maximises pupils' progress.

While the curriculum is well planned and staff are clear about what they are teaching, some recently updated curriculum areas require further development. For example, the newly introduced phonics curriculum is being delivered well, but staff are not using the agreed assessment tools. Also, some aspects of the planned PE curriculum have not been implemented.

The school's vision, 'Once in a lifetime' education, is realised throughout the curriculum. At the time of the inspection, a group of Year 6 pupils were experiencing a residential visit. Their learning was enriched through opportunities to abseil, canoe and climb with support. Staff run a 'Shine Time' group at lunchtime, which pupils enjoy collaboratively. Pupils undertake visits to places of worship, museums, supermarkets, a residential home for older residents and cafés. Each visit broadens pupils' understanding and lived experience of the world. Educational visits develop their social skills very well.

The COVID-19 pandemic had a lasting effect on pupils. Many pupils who attend are exceptionally vulnerable. Some pupils missed two years of school. Their return to school was slow due to concerns for their health and because of their loss of skills and confidence during lockdown. Currently, pupils' overall attendance is higher than it was prior to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Staff have very high expectations for pupils' behaviour. Pupils' levels of understanding vary. Most are keen to learn and listen sensibly. There is little disruption to learning and few incidents which require physical intervention.

Leaders' clear vision for the school is shared by staff. The members of the school-based therapy team liaise closely with staff. All professionals are included and valued. Senior

leaders lead by example. They ensure the smooth arrival and departure of pupils. Leaders are approachable and supportive. Staff workload is manageable.

Governors are very supportive of the school. They do not challenge leaders with sufficient rigour.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Staff do not assess pupils' progress in phonics consistently. Leaders recognise that class teachers need more training before they are able to carry out this task. The school should ensure that class teachers assess pupils' progress accurately and regularly.
- Governors do not challenge senior leaders sufficiently well. This means that some aspects of the school's development work are not rapid enough. The school should make sure that governors are trained to challenge leaders effectively.

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 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 good in March 2015.

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 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	107180
Local authority	Sheffield
Inspection number	10297202
Type of school	Special school
School category	Maintained special school
Age range of pupils	3 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	106
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governing body	Laura Clarke
Headteacher	David Whitehead
Website	www.woolleywood.sheffield.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	14 November 2018, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The school is a primary special school that meets the needs of 106 pupils with a range of severe and profound learning difficulties. Pupils' additional needs include autism and complex medical needs. All have an education, health and care plan.
- The school has an early years provision, which includes two-year-old children.
- The school is co-located with Mansel Primary School.
- The school does not use alternative providers.

Information about this inspection

Inspections are a point-in-time judgement about the quality of a school's educational 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.
- The inspection team met with the headteacher and both deputy headteachers as well as the curriculum leaders of PE, PSHE, phonics and communication.

- The lead inspector also met with three members of the governing body including the deputy chair of governors and two parent governors.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in PE, PSHE, phonics and communication. 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 discussed the curriculum in other subject areas and visited pupils in a forest school lesson.
- 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.
- The lead inspector met with the members of on-site therapy team and discussed their roles and responsibilities in school.

Inspection team

Marian Thomas, lead inspector

Ofsted Inspector

Jenni Machin

Ofsted Inspector

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