Inspection of a good school: Woodlands School

Whitegate Drive, Blackpool, Lancashire FY3 9HF

Inspection dates: 14 and 15 May 2024, and 16 July 2024

Outcome

Woodlands school continues to be a good school.

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils enjoy school. Staff know and respond to pupils' additional needs well. This puts pupils at ease and helps them to feel safe. Pupils receive effective support to express their feelings using a range of appropriate communication strategies. This helps pupils to feel heard and understood by staff and each other.

Pupils, including students in the sixth form, benefit from staff's effective use of sensory strategies. This helps them to feel calm and regulate their behaviour. Staff quickly respond to pupils' individual needs if they struggle with any emotional difficulties. As a result, pupils quickly return to their learning activities.

The school has raised its aspirations for pupils' achievement. It has recently increased the breadth of the curriculum. Pupils learn a range of subjects. Staff typically deliver the curriculum effectively. As a result, pupils achieve well from their different starting points.

Pupils access a vast range of visits and trips. This supports them to learn about the wider world and to build their confidence. For example, some pupils enjoyed a residential trip where they took part in climbing and caving activities. These opportunities enhance pupils' learning and make their time at school memorable.

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

All pupils have an education, health and care (EHC) plan. With the guidance of external specialists when required, the school identifies the additional needs of pupils accurately.

The school has recently refined the curriculum pathways that pupils, from the early years to the sixth form, follow. These pathways are designed to help meet pupils' special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) well. Furthermore, they prepare pupils to be increasingly independent and ready for adulthood.

The school has identified the activities, experiences and themes that pupils will explore in each pathway. Nonetheless, in some areas of learning, the school has not identified the knowledge that pupils will learn clearly enough. This means that, on occasion, some pupils do not learn as well as they could.

In the main, staff check pupils' learning in lessons effectively. When required, accurate assessment information is used well to craft future learning for pupils. The school provides parents and carers with regular updates about their child's progress.

Communication has a high priority across the school. The school has established an unrelenting focus on ensuring that pupils' voices are heard. For example, pupils are supported to use pictures, symbols and signing that help them to improve their interaction and engagement in school and with the world around them. Consequently, pupils share what they need and how they feel knowing that caring and attentive staff will respond quickly.

The school's vision that every pupil will learn to read is non-negotiable. When pupils are ready, staff develop pupils' phonics knowledge and understanding of what they have read. Pupils' love of reading is promoted well throughout the school. For example, a reading vending machine helps to develop pupils' love of books. Some pupils are not ready to start the phonics curriculum. The school ensures that these pupils develop an awareness of sounds in the environment and shared attention. However, some staff are not as skilled as they should be in adapting the curriculum for those pupils who are developing their pre-reading skills.

Staff appreciate the training that they receive to support pupils' behaviour. The school shares detailed information with staff so that they have a clear understanding of the triggers which may affect pupils' behaviour. This helps staff to engage pupils in their learning effectively. Furthermore, families and pupils are supported well to address any reasons for pupils' absence. As a result, pupils' rates of attendance are high.

The school has a strong extra-curricular offer. Pupils, including those who are disadvantaged, benefit from a broad range of enrichment activities. For instance, pupils relish performing in a signing choir and learn how to swim and sew. Many pupils also enjoy taking on leadership roles. For example, the eco-ambassadors enjoy leading projects on saving energy or recycling. These leadership roles empower pupils and help them to develop their social skills.

The school offers many experiences to pupils to prepare them for adult life. For example, pupils make frequent visits to the shops, the local park and the post office. Furthermore, students in the sixth form have various opportunities to carry out work experience, for instance in a supermarket, a recycling centre and a farm. This helps them to learn about life in the workplace.

Governors are committed to ensuring that pupils have their needs met effectively. They use their expertise to provide appropriate support and challenge to the school. Staff welcome the school's consideration of their workload and well-being when making changes to the quality of education that pupils receive.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- In some curriculum areas, the school has not identified the knowledge that pupils need to learn clearly enough. This limits how well pupils' knowledge builds on what they already know and can do. The school should ensure that, in all curriculum areas, the knowledge that pupils will learn is identified clearly.
- Some staff do not have sufficient awareness, understanding and skill to adapt the reading curriculum for those pupils who are not yet ready to learn phonics. This means that, at times, learning activities are not as focused as they could be in helping pupils to be ready to learn to read. The school should ensure that staff have a detailed knowledge of the pre-reading curriculum and that they are suitably equipped to develop pupils' pre-reading skills.

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 September 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

Unique reference number	119871
Local authority	Blackpool
Inspection number	10294338
Type of school	All-through special
School category	Community special
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	110
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	16
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governing body	Kristina Penny
Headteacher	Karen Haworth
Website	www.woodlands.blackpool.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	9 October 2018, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The school caters for pupils with SEND. All pupils have an EHC plan. Pupils' primary needs are severe learning difficulties and autism.
- The school makes use of three registered alternative providers.
- The school has provision for two-year-old children. However, at the time of the inspection, there were no children in the Nursery class.

Information about this inspection

- Inspections are a point-in-time judgement about the quality of a school's education provision.
- The inspection started on 14 May 2024. Inspectors returned on 16 July 2024 to gather additional evidence in line with Ofsted inspections and visits: Deferring, pausing and

gathering additional evidence policy. The evidence gathered from both visits was used to inform the final judgements.

- 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 held meetings with the headteacher and other school leaders. Inspectors also met with a range of other staff.
- Inspectors spoke with members of the governing body, including the chair of governors. They also spoke with representatives of the local authority and the school improvement partner.
- The inspectors observed pupils' behaviour across the school, including at social times.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in personal, social, health and economic education; early reading and communication; and physical education and physical development. For each deep dive, inspectors discussed the curriculum with leaders, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers, spoke to some pupils about their learning and looked at a sample of pupils' work. The lead inspector observed pupils reading to a familiar adult.
- Inspectors met with leaders to review other areas of the curriculum.
- Inspectors reviewed a range of documents, including the school's self-evaluation and records relating to pupils' attendance and behaviour.
- Inspectors spoke with the leaders responsible for pupils' wider development, behaviour, the sixth form, careers education and preparation for adulthood.
- 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 considered the responses to Ofsted Parent View, including the free-text comments. They also considered the responses to Ofsted's online surveys for staff. There were no responses to Ofsted's survey for pupils.

Inspection team

Adam Sproston, lead inspector	His Majesty's Inspector
Chris Pollitt	His Majesty's Inspector
Amina Modan	His Majesty's Inspector
Sheldon Logue	Ofsted Inspector

The Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted) regulates and inspects to achieve excellence in the care of children and young people, and in education and skills for learners of all ages. It regulates and inspects childcare and children's social care, and inspects the Children and Family Court Advisory and Support Service (Cafcass), schools, colleges, initial teacher training, further education and skills, adult and community learning, and education and training in prisons and other secure establishments. It assesses council children's services, and inspects services for children looked after, safeguarding and child protection.

If you would like a copy of this document in a different format, such as large print or Braille, please telephone 0300 123 1231, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.

You may reuse this information (not including logos) free of charge in any format or medium, under the terms of the Open Government Licence. To view this licence, visit www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/doc/open-government-licence/, write to the Information Policy Team, The National Archives, Kew, London TW9 4DU, or email: psi@nationalarchives.gsi.gov.uk.

This publication is available at http://reports.ofsted.gov.uk/.

Interested in our work? You can subscribe to our monthly newsletter for more information and updates: http://eepurl.com/iTrDn.

Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T: 0300 123 1231
Textphone: 0161 618 8524
E: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
W: www.gov.uk/ofsted

© Crown copyright 2024