



The Woodlands School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 103730
LEA Coventry
Inspection number 276985
Inspection dates 22 February 2006 to 23 February 2006
Reporting inspector Pamela Haezewindt HMI

This inspection was carried out under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

Type of school	Comprehensive	School address	Broad Lane
School category	Community		Coventry
Age range of pupils	11 to 18		West Midlands CV5 7FF
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	024 76462634
Number on roll	1050	Fax number	024 76467190
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair of governors	Mr Walter Dye
Date of previous inspection	30 October 2000	Headteacher	Mr Neil Charlton

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and four Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

The school is a larger-than-average comprehensive with lower-than-average numbers of boys in the sixth form. The school serves the city of Coventry. Despite falling rolls in local primary schools, the school has maintained its numbers. The large majority of students are of White British origin but 14% of students come from a broad mix of minority ethnic backgrounds, of which Indian is the largest. The school has a lower-than-average number of students eligible for free school meals and a much higher-than-average number of students identified with specific learning difficulties. It became a specialist sports college in 2003.

Key for inspection grades

Grade 1	Outstanding
Grade 2	Good
Grade 3	Satisfactory
Grade 4	Inadequate

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

Inspectors agree with the school's judgement that it is satisfactory and provides satisfactory value for money. Students arrive in school with standards which are just average and they make satisfactory progress up to the end of Year 11. However, the standards and achievement in the sixth form are not yet good enough and there is room for improvement in science in Key Stage 3. Personal development and well-being are satisfactory, with some good features. Teaching and learning are satisfactory overall but with some weaknesses. Leadership and management are satisfactory. There are some good school initiatives to improve teaching and learning and to challenge boys to reach their potential but they are not yet bearing fruit in all classrooms. For example, there are still occasional incidents of low-level disruption related to dull teaching. There is good extra-curricular provision and the house system and mentoring help boys to settle well into school. The lack of resources for Information and Communication Technology (ICT) in the main school and the sixth form is a cause for concern. Development has been hampered by financial constraints and listed building status.

Almost all of the improvements required by the last inspection have been made, although opportunities for spiritual development are still too few. The school has become a sports college, which has brought good benefits, not the least being the new sports buildings under construction. Many boys show keen enjoyment in coming to the school and in participating in the many sporting opportunities. Joining with the local girls' school for sixth form provision has provided greater breadth and resources. These developments show the school has the capacity to improve.

Effectiveness and efficiency of the sixth form

Grade: 4

The overall effectiveness of the sixth form is unsatisfactory because the standards achieved in GCE AS and A2 examinations are below average and students' progress is not yet good enough. The school agrees that standards and progress are not yet satisfactory. Recent changes to leadership and management and support systems are starting to bring about improvement. For instance, staff now set realistic targets and monitor students' progress. Early indications are that this is being successful as almost all students are making the expected progress so far this year. Teaching is beginning to improve, through higher expectations of what students can achieve. This is bringing greater pace and challenge to lessons. Students are very positive about the sixth form and retention rates are good. The consortium, which includes another local school, provides a satisfactory, broad curriculum which has strengths in A level provision and opportunities for extension activities and social events. Recent management changes have brought more effective coordination and a more consistent approach to such matters as timetabling and transport between the school sites. Leadership and management of the sixth form are satisfactory.

What the school should do to improve further

- Improve standards and achievement in the sixth form by setting challenging targets and monitoring progress regularly.
- Improve progress in science in Key Stage 3, for example, by providing more opportunities for practical and independent work.
- Continue to improve teaching and learning so that learners are engaged and well challenged in all lessons so that good progress is made, and the occasional unsatisfactory behaviour eliminated.
- Improve the fabric of the building where possible and resources for ICT in the sixth form and across the school so that learners and teachers can use these regularly to enhance learning in every subject.
- Improve students' opportunities for spiritual development

Achievement and standards

Grade: 3

Grade for sixth form: 4

Achievement and standards in the main school are satisfactory. Generally, students meet challenging targets. The school has implemented an accelerated programme of learning. In 2005 most Year 8 students were entered for national tests in English and about two-thirds were entered in mathematics. They achieved average standards. Year 9 students also achieved average standards in English and mathematics but below average in science. This under-achievement was recognised by the school and action has been taken to raise standards and improve progress in science. At the end of Key Stage 4 students reached average standards in GCSE and other examinations. There was variation between subjects, as in almost all schools. Overall, students made satisfactory progress from the end of Key Stage 3 and very few left without A* to G grades in five subjects.

Students with learning difficulties achieve as well as their fellow students and students in public care achieve well. Progress in almost all lessons observed was at least satisfactory and in some it was good. The targets set in the sports college bid have been met so far. There has been an improvement in the number of students gaining a GCSE in physical education. All students taking the examination in 2005 passed and a broadly average number gained an A* to C grade.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 3

Students' personal development is satisfactory. Attendance and behaviour in the main school are satisfactory and in the sixth form they are good. However, in some lessons in the main school, occasional unsatisfactory behaviour interrupts teaching and learning. This is a concern of a few parents. Relationships between adults and students and amongst students are generally good. Most students say they enjoy school and value the social benefits the house system offers. They feel safe and know who to go to if

they need to talk about any issues. Most students are confident learners and those with learning difficulties participate fully because they know they will receive fair, individual help.

Students have a reasonable involvement in shaping the work of the school through the house system and school councils. For example, they have successfully lobbied for healthier food in school and more opportunities to raise funds for the many charities they support. Many students make a positive contribution to their school community and the world beyond. For example, they organise 'litter picks' in the local area and help with forestry work. Older students mentor younger ones and visit nearby primary schools to talk about their experiences of secondary school.

Sports college status brings a strong emphasis on sport and the development of healthy lifestyles. Many students attend clubs before and after school. Dramatic productions are an annual event. The 'Leadership and Adventure' course for students in Years 10 and 11 encourages resilience and broadens students' awareness of the wider world, as well as raising the self-esteem and attendance of those who take it. Students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is satisfactory overall but planned opportunities for spiritual development are still too few and opportunities are missed to promote the richness and diversity of our multicultural society.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

Teaching and learning are satisfactory throughout the school, which results in students making satisfactory progress. The school monitors teaching and learning effectively and the extensive regular training has resulted in good planning in most classes and a greater variety of teaching methods in some. Many teachers make lesson objectives clear and communicate them effectively to students. A good variety of teaching strategies was employed in lessons observed in modern foreign languages, music, art and English. When the work is particularly challenging, students are well motivated, concentrate well and work hard. In the few lessons where there is little variety and work is not challenging enough, students lose interest and some misbehave, affecting the learning of others. In science, for example, students copy too much work from text books. They do insufficient practical work themselves in some lessons and their scientific enquiry skills are below the levels expected. Where there is low-level disruption, pace of lessons deteriorates through interruptions and often material is not covered and work is not consolidated. Sometimes misbehaviour occurs because younger students have already decided that they will not continue a subject beyond Year 8. Management of this type of situation needs to be thought through by the school.

Most teachers mark work conscientiously but do not always give sufficient points for improvement. Students know their National Curriculum and GCSE targets but do not always know how to improve their work. They are given few opportunities to assess

their own and others' work, to take more responsibility for their own learning as they get older, or to prepare for the sixth form. However, the school has made the development of assessment a priority and in-service training for all staff is planned.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

The curriculum is satisfactory. It enables students to progress year on year and meets the requirements of the National Curriculum, except for students who are given support for their specific learning needs when others are learning a modern foreign language in Years 7 and 8. The curriculum does not meet the recommended teaching time for secondary schools since it takes an hour from the timetable for the teachers' teaching and learning session. PSHE, careers and citizenship are taught through six dedicated days a year. While this arrangement benefits from the clear focus provided by specialist teachers and speakers, it makes no provision for students who are absent.

To provide lessons with more challenge and pace, the school has condensed work usually taught over Years 7 to 9 into Years 7 and 8. This year, students began GCSE work in Year 9 and will take these examinations in Year 10. It is too early to judge the effectiveness of this ambitious plan but students are very enthusiastic and think it will stand them in good stead for life beyond school. Plans for the subsequent development of the Year 11 curriculum and preparation for sixth form are at an early stage.

There is a good range of GCSE option choices and many students choose the Sports College-inspired 'Leadership and Adventure' course that leads to a variety of certificates, including Sports Leader Award. However, the choice of vocational courses is quite limited and opportunities to learn about enterprise are limited. The school provides well for the small number of disaffected students through courses partly based in the local community.

The range of extracurricular activities is good and develops students' personal ambitions well. Sports college resources have extended very well the range of sports available and participation rates are high. The sports college's outreach work is having a positive influence on physical education and community sport through raising standards and levels of participation. The many opportunities for work experience, foreign travel, cultural activities and revision clubs give the curriculum interest and variety.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 3

The school takes satisfactory care of its students. The good house system ensures supportive relationships are established early. Students' learning targets are tracked regularly but students are not always involved in this process and so do not fully understand what they have to do to improve their work. Students of all ages act as mentors and this develops a sense of 'family' support. For example, Year 8 students welcome Year 7 as they start at the school and older students help younger ones with reading and sporting activities. Parents are kept fully informed of decisions their children are required to make regarding subject options, and students are helped to

make informed choices. For example, an options evening for Year 8 students was exceptionally well attended on a cold winter night during the inspection. The school provides effective guidance for sixth form students, especially those who wish to apply for university places. Students with learning difficulties and disabilities are carefully identified and receive satisfactory support, with external guidance sought when necessary. Breakfast clubs provide a good start to the day for students who wish to attend them. Arrangements for child protection and the care of vulnerable students and for making risk assessments are all satisfactory.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

Leadership and management are satisfactory. Leaders and managers set satisfactory direction for the school and there is good commitment by staff to school development and the various initiatives the school has put in place over the past two years.

The school's self-evaluation is satisfactory. Students' performance is monitored soundly. Evaluation leads to setting targets for student improvement and challenging targets have been set for pupil outcomes for this year and 2007. Short-term targets for individual students are not as well or as consistently set. There is no overarching tracking system that all staff can access to find out the full details of each student's personal and academic progress and set targets accordingly.

Performance management and departmental review are well linked to teachers' professional development. There is a robust system for monitoring and evaluating lessons. The school has taken the innovative step of providing one hour a week teacher development time in school for all staff and the focus is based on needs identified through the lesson observations. Inspectors did not always see the evidence of this development work in lessons and a rigorous evaluation of the impact of it on teaching and learning is needed.

The school is inclusive and seeks different ways to help students do their best. Links with other services to support students are satisfactory. It consults parents well, for example, about proposed changes to the curriculum or school day.

Resources are deployed soundly, given the issues the school has had with its budget and the serious effects of the school being a designated listed building. Senior leaders have done very well to ensure that the school starts the next year on a sound financial basis. The listed accommodation in many areas of the school is unsatisfactory; for example, some classrooms are very cold owing to draughty windows, and flooring is in pieces. There are insufficient computers and interactive whiteboards, which severely limits the use of ICT for learning.

The Chair of Governors knows the school well. The board is more stable than it has ever been, it is very supportive and there is more challenge than at the time of the previous inspection. A daily act of collective worship or reflection does not yet take place.

Since the last inspection, senior leaders have gained sports college status for the school, brought about improvement in the sixth form and launched a number of initiatives to improve teaching, to improve boys' motivation and to raise their achievement. Improvements required in the last inspection have mostly been achieved. Leadership and management provide the school with satisfactory capacity to improve.

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Inspection judgements

<i>Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate</i>	School Overall	16-19
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Overall effectiveness

How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners?	3	4
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	3	3
The quality and standards in foundation stage	NA	NA
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	3	3
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	Yes	Yes
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes	Yes

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	3	4
The standards ¹ reached by learners	3	4
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	3	4
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	3	

Personal development and well-being

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	3	3
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	3	3
The behaviour of learners	3	2
The attendance of learners	3	
How well learners enjoy their education	3	2
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	3	2
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	2	2
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	2	3
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	3	3

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	3	3
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	3	3
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	3	3

¹ Grade 1 - Exceptionally and consistently high; Grade 2 - Generally above average with none significantly below average; Grade 3 - Broadly average; Grade 4 - Exceptionally low.

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	3	3
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	3	3
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets, through quality assurance and self-review	3	3
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	3	3
How effectively and efficiently resources are deployed to achieve value for money	3	3
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	3	3
The adequacy and suitability of staff to ensure that learners are protected	Yes	Yes

The extent to which schools enable learners to be healthy	
Learners are encouraged and enabled to eat and drink healthily	Yes
Learners are encouraged and enabled to take regular exercise	Yes
Learners are discouraged from smoking and substance abuse	Yes
Learners are educated about sexual health	Yes
The extent to which providers ensure that learners stay safe	
Procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements	Yes
Risk assessment procedures and related staff training are in place	Yes
Action is taken to reduce anti-social behaviour, such as bullying and racism	Yes
Learners are taught about key risks and how to deal with them	Yes
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution	
Learners are helped to develop stable, positive relationships	Yes
Learners, individually and collectively, participate in making decisions that affect them	Yes
Learners are encouraged to initiate, participate in and manage activities in school and the wider community	Yes
The extent to which schools enable learners to achieve economic well-being	
There is provision to promote learners' basic skills	Yes
Learners have opportunities to develop enterprise skills and work in teams	Yes
Careers education and guidance is provided to all learners in key stage 3 and 4 and the sixth form	Yes
Education for all learners aged 14–19 provides an understanding of employment and the economy	Yes

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

On behalf of the inspectors who visited your school recently I should like to thank you for contributing to the inspection. We enjoyed talking to you very much and were grateful for your directions around the school. We were pleased to find that The Woodlands School provides a satisfactory standard of education for you. This is what we found.

You make satisfactory progress from when you enter the school in Year 7 to when you leave in Year 11. However, those of you in the sixth form have not made satisfactory progress in the past and there are only now signs that you are beginning to do so. The school has put in robust measures to ensure this happens.

Teaching is satisfactory and in some lessons it is good. However, sometimes it is dull and does not challenge you enough. When this is the case, some students' behaviour is not as good as it should be and sometimes this disrupts the learning of others. The school has good strategies for improving teaching.

Almost all of your parents and carers, like you, are happy with the school.

You like the house system, which helps you establish good relationships in school.

You enjoy the fact that the school is a sports college and this brings you good out-of-school opportunities, opportunities to be physically healthy and to contribute to the community.

There is not enough ICT used across the school in different subjects by you or the teachers because the school does not have enough resources. This is partly due, like the poor accommodation, to the fact that the school is a listed building and is very expensive or difficult to improve.

We have asked the school to see that standards and progress in the sixth form are improved, and also progress in science in Years 7 and 8. We have also asked that the school makes sure that teaching continues to improve so that teaching and learning are good in all lessons, and all students respect each other's right to learn. We have asked that, where possible, buildings and ICT resources are improved, and that you have more opportunities to develop spiritually. This means that you are given more time to reflect on your lives, those of others, and the world generally, and what a wondrous place it can be. You could play a part by suggesting things to do in subjects and assemblies.

Thank you again for your welcome. We enjoyed visiting your school.