



The Woodlands School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 121770
LEA North Yorkshire
Inspection number 281095
Inspection dates 1 February 2006 to 2 February 2006
Reporting inspector Mrs Rosemary Eaton CfBT Lead Inspector

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

Type of school	Special	School address	Woodlands Drive
School category	Community special		Scarborough
Age range of pupils	2 to 16		North Yorkshire YO12 6QN
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	01723 373260
Number on roll	86	Fax number	01723 371715
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair of governors	Mr J Aston
Date of previous inspection	22 May 2000	Headteacher	Mr P Edmondson

Age group	Inspection dates	Inspection number
2 to 16	1 February 2006 - 2 February 2006	281095

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two additional inspectors.

Description of the school

This is a school for pupils with a variety of learning difficulties and/or disabilities, primarily moderate or severe learning difficulties, social, emotional and behavioural difficulties, or autistic spectrum disorders. At present, there are no children in the Foundation Stage. Very few pupils are from minority ethnic groups. Most of the 12 looked after children are designated as such because they receive respite care. The school's residential provision, known as 'the hostel', offers planned overnight stays of between one and four nights per week. About eight pupils are accommodated on each occasion, with a total of 21 currently using the facility. The Commission for Social Care Inspection (CSCI) inspects the hostel annually.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

Woodlands is a good school with outstanding features and provides good value for money. The inspectors agreed with the school's view of its overall performance and with its judgements about most aspects of its work. However, the school was modest in its evaluation of pupils' personal development and the quality of care, guidance and support it provides. All pupils achieve well although, owing to their learning difficulties and/or disabilities, the levels they attain are much lower than those found in mainstream schools. Their personal development is outstanding and the hostel makes a significant contribution to this. Attendance and behaviour are good. Pupils enjoy the school enormously and the wide-ranging activities it offers. The quality of teaching is good. Lessons are often fun, but pupils are expected to work hard. Many aspects of the curriculum are good, but it is satisfactory overall because the planning for ICT needs more attention in order to ensure that pupils' learning builds progressively throughout the school. Pupils are looked after extremely well, supported by the school's impressive links with a wide range of agencies. Leadership and management are good, with staff and governors sharing the headteacher's determination to provide as well as possible for every pupil. As a result, the school has moved on well since the previous inspection and its capacity for further improvement is good.

Effectiveness and efficiency of boarding provision

Grade: 2

The hostel is good and this judgement is fully endorsed by the most recent CSCI report. This indicates that the National Minimum Standards for Residential Special Schools are met in almost every respect. The main recommendation is that the bathrooms would benefit from modernisation and the installation of showers. There has been good improvement since the previous CSCI report. In particular, a separate, attractive dining room has been created.

The hostel aims to help pupils develop their independent living skills, extend their leisure experiences and provide support for families. These aims are met very well. Pupils thoroughly enjoy their overnight stays. All aspects of their personal development are supported very positively, for instance, through opportunities to join in local community groups, take part in an accredited award scheme and socialise with staff and friends. Staff are very committed to caring for pupils and preparing them for future life. All involved with the school greatly value this boarding element and the contribution made to pupils' education in its broadest sense.

What the school should do to improve further

- Ensure that the ICT curriculum is planned in such a way that pupils' learning builds systematically as they move up through the school.
- Carry out the recommendations for improving the accommodation set out in the most recent CSCI report.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Owing to their learning difficulties and/or disabilities, pupils' standards are very much lower than those expected for their age. Currently, most of those starting school have more severe and complex learning difficulties and/or disabilities than the school's oldest pupils. As a result, the levels reached by its leavers are set to decline, year on year. Nevertheless, all pupils make good progress as they move up through the school. They frequently meet the challenging individual targets set by teachers and the analysis of assessment information confirms that achievement is good.

By the end of Year 11, all pupils have been successful in accredited courses, recognising their achievements. All nine of those who left in 2005 gained certificates at Entry level, in subjects such as ICT and mathematics, and in various units of work, such as careers education. The school's target for Entry level accreditation was met, despite three of those expected to do particularly well having left school before finishing their courses. This year, a group of higher attaining pupils are on target to achieve success in general certificate of secondary education (GCSE) science. Annually, small numbers of pupils make such good progress in their learning and personal development that they transfer to mainstream schools.

Pupils' particular learning difficulties and/or disabilities mean that many struggle with reading and writing, and often reach lower levels in these aspects than in other subjects. However, their achievement remains good because of the good progress they make.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

Erring on the side of caution, the school judged this aspect to be good. It is, in fact, outstanding. Assemblies make strong contributions to pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. 'Litter Wrapping', a rap stemming from the experience of picking litter, clearly demonstrated their concerns about the environment. A wealth of different activities ranging from work experience to sports tournaments, support social development and help pupils develop the skills needed to contribute to the community and for life beyond school. Attendance is good overall, particularly as a number of pupils join the school with a history of poor attendance. The school council is one way in which pupils are encouraged to voice their opinions. One council member said 'We have too many ideas for them all to be carried out!' Behaviour is good and parents appreciate the way their children grow in confidence and self esteem. Pupils are encouraged to make healthy choices at meal times; the cook tempting them to try different tastes. Pupils understand the importance of physical exercise, for example, persevering on a 'Tour de Woodlands' - by exercise bike.

The hostel provides excellent opportunities for pupils to relax and have fun with friends they could not otherwise meet out of school, and to make new ones, for instance, at 'Brownies'. Their successes in personal development are recognised through a national award system.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

The quality of teaching and learning is good. Teachers use their knowledge of each pupil's needs in order to plan highly relevant activities. For example, in an English lesson for pupils in Year 2 with autistic spectrum disorders, the teacher used a variety of motivating tasks and resources, and changed the way pupils were grouped so as to better provide for them; a mechanical mouse very successfully encouraged pupils to develop their understanding of 'on' and 'under'. The school's consistent drive to promote pupils' independence is very evident. Older, lower attaining pupils persevere with challenging work, for example, learning to renew linen on a bed; they are treated as young adults and helped to appreciate why their lessons are so important to their future lives. Teaching assistants make very significant contributions to pupils' learning, such as helping to ensure that behaviour is managed consistently and highly effectively. Very occasionally, teachers misjudge the timing of activities and the pace of learning slows or parts of lessons are rushed.

There are good systems to record the levels at which pupils are working as they move up through the school. The data collected are used well; for instance, to group pupils according to their needs during lessons or to modify the curriculum where necessary, either for individuals or the whole school.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

The school judged its curriculum to be good and this is true in some respects. However, ICT is now taught through other subjects, rather than separately, and this significant change is still in progress. As a result, the arrangements are not as effective as those for other key subjects. The curriculum is satisfactory, rather than good. Major developments such as this, and the provision of additional accreditation for lower attaining pupils have occurred rightly in response to the changing nature of the school's population. In the primary years and, increasingly, for older pupils, there is an excellent emphasis on scheduled opportunities for learning to work independently. The curriculum is flexible and often responds to individual needs, for example, through arrangements for pupils to attend lessons at mainstream schools. The physical education curriculum is very wide ranging and makes a significant contribution to pupils' well-being and personal development.

Popular clubs, including those provided by the hostel, help pupils to learn and have fun in the process. Staff find plenty of ways to enrich National Curriculum subjects and broaden pupils' experiences, through visitors and visits, including residential activities away from school.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 1

The success of the school's focus on ensuring pupils are safe, healthy, and happy is outstanding; its own judgement was more modest. Child protection arrangements are comprehensive, include all aspects of care in the hostel and are regularly reviewed and updated. Potential risks around the school are assessed, prioritised and minimised. Incidents of challenging behaviour are recorded and analysed; the information is used successfully in individual care and behaviour plans. Pupils say they feel secure because of excellent relationships with staff. They commented, 'staff listen to you' and they 'will do anything to help you'. The wealth of assessment information is used well to provide support for individuals, with plans to analyse the progress of different groups of pupils, such as boys and girls. There are comprehensive arrangements to prepare pupils for the next stage in their lives; for instance, those considering residential college gain extra experience in the hostel to support their applications.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

The school is well led and managed. The headteacher provides strong leadership, informed by comprehensive systems to collect information. Although the school did not pitch accurately all of the judgements about itself, it is very aware of its strengths and areas needing improvement. Where issues are identified, for example, the need to respond to its increasingly complex population, decisive and timely action is taken. The school is conscious that the planned developments in ICT are being hampered by the lack of specialist expertise within the staff and is currently attending to this. Responsibilities are delegated effectively to the senior management team; the deputy headteacher has successfully led the recent changes to systems for checking on pupils' progress. Subject leadership is also good; teachers analyse performance and decide future actions, contributing to the school's development plan.

An outstanding feature is the shared commitment to ensure all pupils' individual needs are met. This determination is supported effectively by governors and extremely strong partnerships with a host of schools, agencies and other community links. The school provides good value for money. It is very outward looking, seeking advice when necessary but also keen to share expertise; for instance, through 'Autism Awareness Days', which professionals and parents attend. There has been good improvement since the previous inspection, and the school is well placed to continue 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?	2	NA
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	1	NA
The quality and standards in foundation stage	NA	NA
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	2	NA
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	Yes	NA
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes	NA

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	2	NA
The standards ¹ reached by learners	4	NA
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	2	NA
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	2	NA

Personal development and well-being

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	1	NA
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1	NA
The behaviour of learners	2	NA
The attendance of learners	2	NA
How well learners enjoy their education	1	NA
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	1	NA
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	1	NA
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	1	NA
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	2	NA

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	2	NA
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	3	NA
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	1	NA

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?	2	NA
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	2	NA
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets, through quality assurance and self-review	2	NA
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	1	NA
How effectively and efficiently resources are deployed to achieve value for money	2	NA
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	2	NA
The adequacy and suitability of staff to ensure that learners are protected	Yes	NA

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

Thank you for being so friendly and helpful when we visited your school.

What we liked best about Woodlands:

- you all work hard and learn a lot
- the oldest pupils do well in exams
- you all try to do as much as you can without any help
- the teachers make your lessons very interesting
- all the adults do their best to make sure you are happy and safe
- staying at the hostel lets you try lots of different activities
- Mr Edmondson makes sure that all of you get the same chances to do well.

What we have asked the school to do now:

- make sure that you keep improving in your learning about ICT
- modernise the bathrooms in the hostel.