



# Thomas Wolsey School

## Inspection Report

**Unique Reference Number** 124907  
**LEA** SUFFOLK LEA  
**Inspection number** 281833  
**Inspection dates** 27 April 2006 to 28 April 2006  
**Reporting inspector** Mr. George Derby LI

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

<b>Type of school</b>	Special	<b>School address</b>	642 Old Norwich Road
<b>School category</b>	Community special		IP1 6LU
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	3 to 18		
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed	<b>Telephone number</b>	01473 467600
<b>Number on roll</b>	92	<b>Fax number</b>	01473 462525
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body	<b>Chair of governors</b>	Mrs.Linda Hoggarth
<b>Date of previous inspection</b>	4 October 1999	<b>Headteacher</b>	Mrs. Nancy McArdle

<b>Age group</b> 3 to 18	<b>Inspection dates</b> 27 April 2006 - 28 April 2006	<b>Inspection number</b> 281833
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## Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

## Description of the school

Thomas Wolsey is a school for pupils with physical disability. Each pupil has a statement of special educational need. The pupils' needs are extremely wide ranging and all pupils have learning difficulties. A small number have complex or profound difficulties. About a half of the pupils are wheelchair users and a similar proportion need some alternative way of communicating. Because of pupils' learning difficulties, their attainment on entry to school is well below that which is expected for their age. Most pupils are from White British backgrounds and boys outnumber girls by nearly two to one. A small number of pupils are eligible for free school meals, which is a lot lower than average for a school of this type. Pupils come from a wide range of social circumstances. A small number of pupils are looked after by the local authority. Since the last inspection the school has developed an outreach service which is funded by the local authority. This supports pupils with physical disability in Suffolk mainstream schools as well as the 25% of Thomas Wolsey pupils who are also placed in their local school. The school has numerous prestigious awards.

## Key for inspection grades

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

## **Overall effectiveness of the school**

### **Grade: 2**

Thomas Wolsey is a good school with some outstanding features. It provides good value for money. The work of the outreach service is good. Pupils' profound disabilities are no barrier. Quite the opposite: these are a challenge which the school rises to very well. Through effective work with parents and excellent teamwork with a range of different professionals, pupils are outstandingly cared for and their wide-ranging communication and physical difficulties are extremely well supported. Pupils become highly effective and confident communicators, despite many having limited spoken language. Computers are used well to support communication. However, in lessons opportunities are sometimes missed to use information and communication technology (ICT) to support teaching and learning. Pupils find learning enjoyable and exciting. Across the school they make good progress and achieve well. This is because of effective teaching and learning and a good curriculum which has wide-ranging opportunities for the pupils to learn and make progress. Provision in the Foundation Stage is good and children achieve well. The students in the sixth form have a good range of opportunities to gain awards, although the range is somewhat narrower in Key Stage 4. The school's records of pupils with the most complex needs do not always show the good progress that they make. This is because the way of recording the assessments for these pupils is not refined enough. The school has begun to set whole-school targets, but the process by which it does this leads to targets which are far too challenging. The pupils' personal development and well-being are outstanding. The support for their self-esteem is also excellent and results in pupils who have high levels of confidence. They become mature young adults, well prepared for their next stage of education. Through the determination of the headteacher and the commitment of staff, the school has improved well since the last inspection. It is clearly capable of doing so in the future. Leadership and management of the school and outreach service are good, and staff are clearly focused on improved progress for all pupils. The senior management team are a clear driving force regarding quality and performance. This is a school and service that knows itself well. The inspection judgements are largely in line with the school's own views which were expressed before the inspection. However, in a few places the school was over-generous with its judgements.

## **Effectiveness and efficiency of the sixth form**

### **Grade: 2**

Inspection findings support the school's view that the sixth form is good. It has improved well since the last inspection and has resolved all of the issues raised at that time. Students achieve well academically through a good range of courses at school and college that are matched appropriately to their differing needs. They make outstanding progress in their personal development, growing in confidence and maturity. Teaching is good overall and occasionally outstanding. Students are cared for and guided exceptionally well, and encouraged to become as independent as possible as they prepare for life after school. Leadership and management of the sixth form are good.

## **What the school should do to improve further**

- Refine assessment so that the school is better able to demonstrate the progress that the pupils with the most complex needs make, and devise a system for more accurately setting whole-school targets.
- Make even better use of ICT to support pupils' learning.
- Broaden the range of opportunities for pupils to gain qualifications by the end of Key Stage 4.

## **Achievement and standards**

### **Grade: 2**

The pupils achieve well across the school. Children in the Foundation Stage make good progress overall, especially in their communication skills, physical development and personal development. As a result of the pupils' significant difficulties in learning, the standards reached are much lower than those of most other pupils of their age. However, they make good progress in English, mathematics and science. In physical education, their numerous awards and achievements indicate strong performance in relation to their disabilities. The quality of art work around the school shows very imaginative use of materials and strong creativity. Pupils make significant strides in their ability to communicate and in their confidence to contribute to lessons, despite many being unable to speak. Their progress in this area is outstanding. This is because of the highly expert nature of the staff and the high quality of support that they give the pupils. Staff's knowledge of pupils' needs is very strong and the planning to meet these is thorough. Consequently, pupils largely meet their good quality, specific targets, which address their special needs well. Where they only partially achieve them, it is often because aspects of their disability prevent them from doing so. The school is aware that it could take better account of this possibility when targets are set. The school thoroughly analyses pupils' progress and achievements, although the whole-school targets it sets are far too challenging given the range of ability and needs of pupils. This is because they are not sufficiently linked to the actual progress pupils make. There is no significant difference in the progress made by different groups or genders, although the school's data show that some pupils with very complex needs make slower progress compared with the rest. This is because the way of recording progress for these pupils is not sufficiently refined to show the very small but significant steps they do make. By the time the students leave the school at the end of the sixth form, they achieve well in a good range of awards which match their needs well. The school starts the courses in Key Stage 4 to allow time for pupils to succeed in the sixth form. However, there is room to extend the range of qualifications so that more may be achieved by the end of Year 11.

## **Personal development and well-being**

### **Grade: 1**

This is a very happy school where pupils grow in confidence and self-esteem and make outstanding progress in their personal development. Pupils' behaviour and their attitudes to school are exceptionally good and attendance is good for a school of this

type. Pupils are highly appreciative of the support they receive and the opportunities that the school provides. They get on extremely well with one another and with the staff, and say that the school is 'almost like a second family'. They feel safe, and most pupils understand the importance of making healthy choices. They enjoy school considerably, responding to lessons and other activities with high levels of interest and enthusiasm. Pupils make good progress in their spiritual and cultural development and exceptionally good progress in their social and moral development. They readily embrace opportunities to take responsibility, for instance as representatives on the school council, where they are involved actively in making decisions. They support the school and community well through fundraising. The good progress that they make in developing basic skills of literacy, numeracy and ICT, the opportunities to learn about the world of work and the development of a wide range of personal qualities stand them in good stead for the future.

## **Quality of provision**

### **Teaching and learning**

#### **Grade: 2**

The quality of teaching and learning is good across the school and there are some outstanding features. Teaching is strong in the Foundation Stage and has improved in the sixth form so that it is now good. Through the school's rigorous monitoring of teaching, senior staff have a good grasp of its quality. The support they provide to aid improvement clearly pays dividends. Most lessons seen during the inspection were good and a few were outstanding, for example, in physical education. Occasionally teaching is only satisfactory; here the pace of lessons wanes at times and pupils lose focus. Sometimes pupils are not stretched as much as they could be. Teaching is lively and stimulating and the pupils are clear about what they are to do and learn. The pupils clearly enjoy learning and on a number of occasions they remarked, 'This is fun!' They work hard and productively, often concentrating extremely well, because the work challenges and interests them. Three particularly strong features of lessons are: - the excellent support given to pupils' ways of communicating and the use of sign, symbols and electronic aids - the extremely careful attention to pupils' positioning and personal care needs provided by the high quality teaching assistants - the outstanding relationships on which is built trust and through which pupils are managed effectively. Pupils learn well because staff have a good knowledge of their subjects and know the pupils' needs so well. This is through the use of the school's mostly good ways of assessing pupils and also their informal knowledge. Full account is usually taken of their physical, learning and emotional needs in lessons, and activities match well the different ways pupils learn. However, staff sometimes find it difficult to provide work which accurately meets the needs of pupils with profound needs and the activities are not always entirely relevant. Good attention is given to the recording of pupils' progress, which enables teachers to assess how much the pupils have learned over a topic or unit of work. Although this demonstrates well that pupils with very complex needs have achieved in lessons, the recording system is not refined enough to show the progress these pupils make over time. Computers are used well to support pupils'

communication. However, many more opportunities could be taken in lessons to use ICT, especially the interactive whiteboards.

## **Curriculum and other activities**

### **Grade: 2**

The school provides pupils with a good range of learning experiences that are relevant to their needs and promote their personal and academic achievement. The curriculum in the Foundation Stage is matched well to national guidelines for this age group, as well as to children's individual learning difficulties and disabilities. Throughout, the school provides exceptionally well for pupils who need assistance in communicating, whether through the use of technological aids, symbols, pictures or signing. The range of qualifications open to pupils at Key Stage 4 is satisfactory, extended by opportunities to follow GCSE courses in mainstream school. However, the range is narrower than in the sixth form. Here, in addition to a good range of courses run by the school, the school works closely with local colleges to ensure that students follow courses that are meaningful and relevant to their interests and aptitudes. A range of enrichment opportunities contributes well to pupils' academic achievement and personal development, expanding their horizons. Opportunities for pupils to take part in sporting activities are a particular strength of the school. The link that the school has established with a school in Uganda is used exceptionally well to promote pupils' personal development, especially in the sixth form.

## **Care, guidance and support**

### **Grade: 1**

The school provides an exceptionally high level of care and support for its pupils. They are known well as individuals, and staff show outstanding dedication to meeting each pupil's personal needs. Pupils say that they are able to trust the staff fully to provide the emotional and practical support that they need. At the same time, the school encourages the pupils to be as independent as possible and guides them effectively in making decisions for themselves. The school is highly effective in promoting positive behaviour and in creating an atmosphere in which pupils learn to care for one another. Arrangements for protecting pupils and ensuring their health and safety are thorough. The school works exceptionally closely with therapists and outside agencies for the benefit of pupils. It has effective systems in place for supporting pupils who spend some of their time in mainstream school or college. Pupils are supported well academically. The setting of targets and tracking of progress for individual pupils are largely good. The school provides parents with valuable support, especially through the meetings provided as part of its outreach work. Therapists provide exceptionally useful guidance to enable parents to work on therapeutic programmes with their children at home.

## Leadership and management

### Grade: 2

Leadership and management are good. This is a well organised school where responsibilities are delegated well and senior and middle managers are clear on their roles. There is a pursuit of excellence. A culture of reflecting on what the school does well and what needs improving is at the heart of everything that is done. As a result, there has been good improvement since the last inspection. The headteacher and deputy headteacher complement each other's skills well. They have developed strong systems for monitoring and evaluating the school's work. Most of the judgements about this made before the inspection were accurate, although a few were a bit generous. They take good account of parents' and pupils' views when planning improvement. The school's detailed knowledge of its strengths and weaknesses means that what it sets itself to do is well thought out, although it does not always clearly identify how its actions will improve pupils' achievement. The school analyses pupils' results and achievement data adequately and focuses the pupils' targets well on the key things they need to learn. However, whole-school target setting has proved difficult, as stated earlier. The headteacher, senior management team and governors share common aspirations for the school and are tenacious in achieving their goals. The headteacher has overcome the considerable limitations of the buildings and has succeeded in providing a good curriculum and outstanding care. The school's commitment to including Thomas Wolsey pupils and supporting other pupils with physical needs in mainstream schools is clearly revealed in its practice. The outreach service is well managed and provides good support. The school's efforts to be re-located on a mainstream school site are to be rewarded in 2008 with new purpose-built facilities. Governors are kept well informed and are supportive. They have a critical eye on the work of the school in many respects, especially when it comes to challenging the headteacher. However, they are not fully aware of the progress that pupils make or the role of target setting in raising achievement. Governance is satisfactory.



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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>	<b>School Overall</b>	<b>16-19</b>
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### Overall effectiveness

<b>How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners?</b>	2	2
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	1	1
The quality and standards in foundation stage	2	NA
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	2	2
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

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

### Personal development and well-being

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

### The quality of provision

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

<sup>1</sup> 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**

<b>How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?</b>	2	2
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	2	
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets, through quality assurance and self-review	2	
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	2	
How effectively and efficiently resources are deployed to achieve value for money	2	
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	3	
The adequacy and suitability of staff to ensure that learners are protected	Yes	Yes

<b>The extent to which schools enable learners to be healthy</b>	
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
<b>The extent to which providers ensure that learners stay safe</b>	
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
<b>The extent to which learners make a positive contribution</b>	
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
<b>The extent to which schools enable learners to achieve economic well-being</b>	
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 taking the time to talk with us during the inspection. You struck us as being polite and enthusiastic learners, and were keen to tell us how good your school is. You clearly enjoy school very much. Yours is a good school, and some parts of its work are excellent. The care that the staff have for you is outstanding. The way that all the different types of staff, both in school and those that help you from the community, work together means that you grow and develop extremely well to become confident young adults. They make you feel exceptionally good about yourselves and believe that you can achieve in all sorts of ways, despite some of you having lots of difficulties to deal with. Of particular mention are those of you who find it difficult to talk. The school is extremely effective at helping you to 'talk' using sign and symbols; all of you who have communication aids use these exceptionally well. We were very impressed with how well the staff keep these programmed so that you have the right vocabulary. Your teachers and assistants teach you well so that you make good progress. Your awards, enthusiasm and performance in physical education, as well as the outstanding way you are taught, mean that you do exceptionally well. Your work in art shows you are highly creative. Well done! We asked Nancy to make some further improvements to help you do even better. We think that you and your teachers could use computers even better to help you learn. The way that the staff set you individual targets to help you improve is good but more needs to be done to make sure that school's own targets are more accurate. The school needs to measure more carefully the progress of those of who find learning really difficult. Finally, the activities undertaken to gain awards in the sixth form are good. However, we think you would benefit from having more opportunities to gain some of these when you are in Years 10 and 11. Good luck everyone.