



# Woodlands Community School

## Inspection Report

**Unique Reference Number** 112999  
**Local Authority** City of Derby  
**Inspection number** 289486  
**Inspection dates** 29–30 November 2006  
**Reporting inspector** Michelle Parker HMI

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

<b>Type of school</b>	Comprehensive	<b>School address</b>	Blenheim Drive
<b>School category</b>	Foundation		Allestree, Derby
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	11–16		Derbyshire DE22 2LW
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed	<b>Telephone number</b>	01332 551921
<b>Number on roll (school)</b>	1185	<b>Fax number</b>	01332 553869
<b>Number on roll (6th form)</b>	188		
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body	<b>Chair</b>	Mr Ian Stewart
		<b>Headteacher</b>	Mr Alan Brady
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	3 December 2001		

<b>Age group</b>	<b>Inspection dates</b>	<b>Inspection number</b>
11–16	29–30 November 2006	289486

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## Introduction

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

## Description of the school

Woodlands School is an oversubscribed 11-18 mixed comprehensive school situated in Allestree, which is in north west Derby. Nearly all students come from the immediate neighbourhood, with some coming from the inner city itself. Most students are of White British heritage, with a small number of other students coming from a range of ethnic backgrounds. The proportion of students with special educational needs is around the national average and the percentage of students eligible for free school meals is below the national average.

Woodlands has had 'Specialist Technology College' status since September 2004.

## 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 and improving school. Ensuring every child really does matter is central to its work. Since his appointment a year ago, the headteacher has effected significant improvements. He has introduced a new school uniform, which has given the school a smart new identity, and a new house system, which has ensured that staff take more responsibility for the pastoral care and academic success of every student. One parent wrote, 'I have seen a great improvement in the school...the pupils look smart and appear to be better behaved when out of school. My daughter is now more motivated to work'.

Standards on entry are above average and subsequent achievement is good. Students make good progress during their time in school and no group of students underperforms. Significant improvements have been made in students' skills in literacy and numeracy and in the number of students gaining high grade GCSEs. Staff know students well, set challenging targets and carefully track their progress to ensure they are successful. Students understand their targets and know how to improve. Good support from teachers ensures they meet their targets.

The curriculum has been improved by the addition of greater vocational opportunities and is now satisfactory. For example, some higher attaining students are able to study engineering with Rolls Royce. Courses for lower attaining pupils give credit to their achievement and allow them to progress well to future training and employment. However, there is still insufficient breadth in vocational education to meet the needs of all students.

A hard working and committed team of staff ensure students develop confidence and high self-esteem. The school regularly proudly celebrates all students' successes. Relationships and behaviour are good. Students enjoy the many opportunities they have to engage in sports and a wide range of extra curricular activities. This, together with the efforts of the new catering team, has encouraged students to eat healthily and take regular exercise. Many of the older students develop their leadership skills by supporting younger pupils and organising activities for them. Appropriate child protection procedures are in place to ensure students' safety. The majority of students enjoy school. The school regularly surveys students to identify how it can improve. For example, as part of its drive to ensure consistently good behaviour, a support specialist now works in the school to improve the support for the small minority of students whose behaviour is challenging. As a result, exclusions have halved this term and last year, students previously at risk of failing all gained five A\*-G grades. Attendance is good. The school has been very energetic in ensuring it is a good neighbour and the community now has positive views about the school. Information to parents has improved, but some feel the school does not respond quickly enough.

Teaching and learning are good. Clear systems for monitoring the quality of lessons are now in place. Consequently, faculties are beginning to share their good practice. However, there still needs to be greater rigour by faculty leaders in monitoring the implementation of school policies because the best teaching is not always identified

and shared. The school has an accurate picture of its strengths and weaknesses. The capacity of the school to improve is good and it provides good value for money. There has been good progress since the last inspection.

Specialist technology status has already had an impact in improving the support to boys and widening opportunities at GCSE level to allow students to take textiles and systems and control. Improvements in science and mathematics results have increased the numbers of students studying these subjects in the sixth form and those expressing an interest in studying at University.

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

### **Grade: 2**

The school's sixth form is effective. Standards of attainment are above average in the majority of subjects. Good teaching ensures that students make good progress during their time in the sixth form. The majority of students achieve their predicted grades and progress on to university education. The school offers a wide range of academic subjects but the provision of vocational courses is not yet fully developed. Students are very committed to the school and play an active role in the organisation of activities and charity events. Many students volunteer to support students in main school classes. They enjoy their time in the sixth form and speak very positively about the many responsibilities and opportunities they are given. As result, they develop as very well rounded young people. One student commented, 'I am certain that the sixth form was the right choice for me, as I have been well supported and encouraged to take responsibility for my learning'. All students take part in the Design 4 Life programme (personal, social, health and citizenship education) which prepares them well for higher education and employment. Care and support are good in the sixth form. Tutors know and care for their students well. Careers advice is good at this level, with an extensive programme of information about higher education. Leadership of the sixth form is good. The sixth form provides good value for money.

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

- Extend the vocational curriculum to better meet the needs of all students.
- Ensure that all leaders monitor and implement school policies consistently.
- Ensure that best practices in teaching are identified and shared effectively.

## **Achievement and standards**

### **Grade: 2**

#### **Grade for sixth form: 2**

Attainment is good and students make good progress by the time they leave school. Students join the school with good prior attainment and they make good progress from Year 7 to Year 9. Standards improved in the national tests at the end of Key Stage 3 in 2006 and both boys and girls attained better results than those in similar schools. The numbers of students achieving level 5+ in all core subjects increased in

2006 and the school meets the needs of high attaining students well. Standards at the end of Year 9 are very strong.

Students make good progress in most GCSE subjects during Key Stage 4. The proportion of students achieving five A\*-C grades improved slightly in 2006 to 68% but the proportion of students achieving three A\*-A grades rose from 20% to 30%. Functional English and mathematics results also improved in 2006 from 56% to 59% and five A\*-G grades result improved by a further 1% to 98%.

An improvement from 2005 was that no students significantly underachieved at Key Stage 4 in 2006. All students have the opportunity to achieve through obtaining nationally recognised qualifications, which enable them to progress to employment, training or further education. The numbers of students who do not go into employment or training are very low. Students with learning difficulties and disabilities make good progress because of the support they receive in class and the good match of the curriculum to their needs.

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

**Grade: 2**

**Grade for sixth form: 2**

Students' personal development is good. They enjoy learning and have a good attitude to school. Disruptions to lessons and break-times are rare; they are effectively dealt with by teachers and are not considered serious by students or staff. Students' attendance is good and is monitored well.

Students' understanding of how to live healthily reflects in what they eat and drink and in how regularly they take advantage of the many physical activities available to them. They feel secure in school, particularly since the introduction of the new pastoral system. Students are confident that they can discuss personal problems with staff if they feel the need.

Students develop a good sense of right and wrong, and appreciate the importance of working together. They develop a wider sense of cultural and spiritual matters through, for instance, tending war graves in the local church, or writing their own 'slave songs', as well as through many regular activities in humanities and personal-social lessons.

Students' contribution to the community is good. They readily assume responsibilities, for instance by joining the school council or becoming sports leaders in primary schools. Clear advice and good support, especially in Years 11 to 13 prepare students well for their future lives, whether this is to be in higher education or at work.

## **Quality of provision**

### **Teaching and learning**

**Grade: 2**

**Grade for sixth form: 2**

Teaching and learning are good. Teachers have responded well to national guidance on how to structure their lessons so that students have opportunities to learn in different ways. In typical lessons, teachers plan carefully and have clear aims for the lesson, which they communicate well to students. As a result, the majority of students are attentive, behave well, and work productively. Students make good progress. Teachers keep accurate records of students' progress. Students know their target grades and know what they need to do to achieve them.

Teachers are keen to try out new methods. Information and communication technology, for example, has improved the delivery of many lessons and several staff contribute to the improvement of teaching and learning by leading training sessions for their colleagues. The school supports new teachers effectively. However, whilst there are some opportunities to share what works well, this practice is not yet embedded well enough to ensure all lessons are as creative and exciting as the best.

### **Curriculum and other activities**

**Grade: 3**

**Grade for sixth form: 3**

The school's curriculum is satisfactory. The curriculum meets the needs of the majority of students with an emphasis on academic courses. There is good provision for additional support in literacy and students are generally well equipped with the skills they will need in later life. Provision for personal and social education has improved with the introduction of a new course, which includes health education and citizenship.

Although most students are able to follow the options of their choice, as they get older, the range of courses offered is too limited to meet all students' needs. The school is extending its work in partnership with other schools, colleges and local businesses to offer a wider range of vocational courses and qualifications for pupils aged 14-19. This is an area, which requires further development to better equip lower attaining students.

The extra curricular provision is very good and caters for a wide range of interests. Students value this and there is good participation in the many activities hosted by the school.

## Care, guidance and support

**Grade: 2**

**Grade for sixth form: 2**

Care, guidance and support are good overall. Arrangements for child protection and health and safety are good. Effective training has meant that all staff deal appropriately with any incidents of bullying and follow required child protection procedures carefully. The welfare of students is further supported very well through the wide range of external agencies used by the school.

Personal guidance for students is good. The new house system groups students from the start of Year 7 until they leave. Staff report that competition has improved students' motivation and behaviour. Target setting is effective because students understand their targets and know what to do to improve.

The redesigned personal, social, health and citizenship education (PSHCE) programme is satisfactory. Careers education is satisfactory overall, with good support from the Connexions service. Transition from primary schools is a strength of the school. Information on courses for the next stage of students' education is good.

Provision for those with learning difficulties and disabilities and for gifted and talented students is good. The school's provision for hearing impaired students is very effective. Thus, the school strives to ensure that all students reach their potential.

## Leadership and management

**Grade: 2**

**Grade for sixth form: 2**

Leadership and management are good. The new headteacher has introduced a refreshing and reflective vision for continuous improvement in the school. Parents, teachers and governors greatly respect and share his focused approach to the promotion of good standards of behaviour and high levels of care and attainment for all students. The evolving senior leadership team is working well with the staff to move the school forward to its next stage of development.

The school's self-evaluation procedures are very effective and clearly identify key areas for development. Staff are now increasingly involved in discussing areas for development and setting the direction of the school. The school improvement plan has been rewritten to highlight priorities, monitor progress and measure outcomes. Subject plans promote whole school development priorities. Faculty leaders are generally effective and new appointments have strengthened the team. Training is in place to improve their departmental monitoring and implementation of school policies. Lesson observation programmes are developing satisfactorily and have led to a clearer emphasis on improving learning and standards in all subjects.

The school runs smoothly and calmly on a day-to-day basis. It is effective in recruiting specialist teachers and there is a good programme of professional development. The



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school has ensured that the support staff are valued and well integrated into the school.

Governors are well informed and have a good understanding of the school's strengths and areas for development. They contribute fully to strategic planning but the school improvement plan does not always acknowledge their monitoring role. Management of the school's budget is good and thus the school provides good value for money. The school has addressed all the issues in the last inspection. There is good capacity for further improvement in the school.



## 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?	2	2
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	2	2
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	2	2
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	2	2
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>	2	2
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2	
The behaviour of learners	2	
The attendance of learners	2	
How well learners enjoy their education	2	
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2	
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	2	
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	2	
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>	3	3
<b>How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?</b>	2	2

<sup>1</sup> Grade 1 - Exceptionally and consistently high; Grade 2 - Generally above average with none significantly below average; Grade 3 - Broadly average to below 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	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, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	2	
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	2	
Do procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements?	Yes	Yes
Does this school require special measures?	No	
Does this school require a notice to improve?	No	

## Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

30 November 2006

Dear Students

Woodlands School, Blenheim Drive, Allestree, Derby DE22 2LW

Thank you for making us so welcome and for contributing so helpfully to the inspection of your school. We listened to your views with interest and were very pleased to hear how much you believed the school had improved since the arrival of your new headteacher. You clearly take pride in your school; your school uniform makes you look very smart and your attendance is good.

We agree with you that you go to a good school that supports you in achieving good results. Your personal development is good. The school encourages you to be healthy and stay safe. Many of you take up the opportunities to develop your leadership skills through working with younger students. You told us that staff deal promptly with bullying and that the rare incidents of disruptive behaviour did not affect your learning. Staff care about you and work hard. Teaching is good and this enables all of you to make good progress.

The very good leadership and vision of your headteacher and commitment of all staff have helped improve the school.

To improve further we have asked the school to:

- increase the range of vocational courses for you to choose from at the end Years 9 and 11;
- check more carefully that all staff apply school policies consistently;
- share its good teaching practice more effectively with all teachers.

We wish you every success in the future.

Best wishes

Michelle Parker

Her Majesty's Inspector