

Woodlands

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	131521
Local Authority	Warwickshire
Inspection number	295456
Inspection dates	16–17 May 2007
Reporting inspector	Janet Thompson HMI

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

Type of school	Special
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	2–19
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	97
6th form	9
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Vivienne Wright
Headteacher	Gillian Simpson
Date of previous school inspection	Not previously inspected
School address	Packington Lane Coleshill Birmingham B46 3JE
Telephone number	01675 463590
Fax number	01675 463584

Age group	2–19
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two of Her Majesty's Inspectors.

Description of the school

Woodlands School opened in April 2006 to cater for pupils with a wide range of learning difficulties and disabilities. The school still operates on two sites 12 miles apart although all pupils will be located on one site from July 2007. Pupils are mainly from north Warwickshire, with some attending from Nuneaton and Bedworth. Approximately one fifth of the pupils are eligible for free school meals and the vast majority are from White British backgrounds. Over three quarters of the pupils are boys. Nearly half the pupils have moderate learning disabilities although the proportion in the secondary phase is much higher than in younger classes. Other pupils have severe or profound and multiple learning disabilities. Many pupils have additional disabilities, for example autistic spectrum disorders or social and emotional difficulties. The nature of the pupils' disabilities means they are working well below national expectations.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

This is a good school with some outstanding features. Careful assessment of the needs and ability of pupils enables teachers to plan effective lessons that build upon previous learning and success. As a result of this and extremely skilled guidance and support, pupils make good progress both in their academic skills and in their personal development. This progress is enhanced by very well planned inclusion opportunities with mainstream schools that are carefully evaluated and take the views of pupils into account.

Pupils make a very good start in the assessment Nursery and Reception Year because of the well planned curriculum and skilled teaching that focuses on helping pupils become independent learners. The quality of the environment to facilitate learning in these classes is of a very high standard. There is a very good understanding of the different levels of progress across the school, and high expectations for all are an enduring feature. Staff and pupils celebrate the progress of all individuals, whether it be gaining a GCSE qualification or making an independent choice for the first time. Pupils enjoy school because of interesting and engaging activities, very positive relationships and the wide range of extra-curricular opportunities. In lessons, pupils are usually very well motivated. There are some lessons that do not reach the high standard of others and although these are satisfactory they lack highly engaging, thought provoking activities. Communication systems are used well in lessons where pupils are dependent on these but there is some inconsistency in the use of signing and symbols across the school.

Pupils feel very involved in the school and rightly take a pride in their school. They are mindful of representing Woodlands when out in the community, be it in a sporting event or eating in a local restaurant. In these situations they demonstrate an equally high level of respect and standard of behaviour as when they are in school.

The vast majority of parents are highly supportive of the school and respect the commitment from staff. One parent stated, 'Teachers and assistants work extremely hard to ensure my son is challenged, encouraged and assisted with his progress.' The headteacher and senior team have very successfully established a vision for the school. They have been extremely effective in bringing together staff from different schools to ensure there are shared values and a belief in the good expectations for every pupil.

The headteacher has excelled in ensuring swift development within the school so that provision meets the needs of all pupils well. This includes outstanding provision for helping pupils to develop healthy lifestyles. The senior staff and governors are monitoring the work in school effectively but evaluation is not always focused sharply enough to identify the outcomes for pupils of different ages and levels of need. There is a high level of commitment from all staff and this, alongside clearly defined structures of accountability, places the school in a good position to build upon current success.

Effectiveness and efficiency of the sixth form

Grade: 2

The sixth form offers a good quality of education. Students make good progress within accredited modules of work which are validated by external moderation. They are enthusiastic learners, particularly when involved in practical and active learning. Work is planned so that they are given good challenge in relation to their needs and prior learning, although some lessons are less actively engaging than others. The focus on personal development is good and

the students have a good understanding of the purpose of their work. Personal, social and health education (PSHE) prepares them well for keeping safe and enables them to have as much independence in their life as is possible, in relation to their learning disabilities. The curriculum is designed to help students make good progress in key skills including personal development, communication, numeracy and information and communication technology (ICT), as well as in life and living skills. The work modules provide a clear vocational pathway for their last few years in school although there is not a wide range of options for all students. Links with colleges are good and enhance the curriculum on offer by providing taster sessions of different subjects and particularly involve students in the creative arts.

What the school should do to improve further

- Establish greater consistency in the use of high quality communication strategies so that all pupils can communicate with each other and staff throughout the school.
- Include more activities for pupils that are fun, thought provoking and enable problem solving in curriculum and lesson planning.
- Ensure evaluation is more focused on the outcomes for pupils, with clear indicators for different age groups and levels of need.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Grade for sixth form: 2

Learners make good progress across the school. At the end of 2006 progress in basic skills was outstanding in Key Stage 1, satisfactory in Key Stages 2 and 3, and good in Key Stage 4 and the sixth form. For some students achieving accreditation at the end of Key Stage 4, reflects outstanding progress from their starting points, particularly in science and mathematics. Pupils are entered for a range of vocational qualifications as well as GCSE and entry level certificates. Over the last two terms progress has been good across the school and across subjects. The school uses a commercial scheme to assess levels of learning within each subject and this provides an ongoing record of achievement.

The school sets challenging targets that expect a good level of progress. These are carefully established from previous rates of learning and an accurate understanding of the pupils' needs. The annual analysis of pupils' progress is rigorous and levels given for pieces of work are well moderated to ensure consistency within the school. The individualised analysis is helpful in identifying dips in achievement and subsequent action is taken, but there is no easily accessible and clear overview of the progress of different groups of learners with different levels of need across each key stage.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Grade for sixth form: 2

The overall personal development and well-being of pupils are good with some outstanding features. There is a very strong emphasis on care and respect for others and this results in a very calm, friendly and purposeful atmosphere. The involvement of pupils in the organisation of the school and making choices affecting their own future education is exemplary. The very effective school council know they have a strong voice and a high level of influence in the school. They truly represent the views of others by finding out what other pupils think.

An excellent range of activities promote cultural and spiritual development. Resulting work is of a high quality, and this demonstrates the pride taken by both staff and pupils. The complex notion of empathy is taught extremely well and excellent understanding was demonstrated by pupils' work about the Holocaust. Behaviour is good because of the high level of pupils' social and moral development brought about by high expectations. There are some outstanding features, for example the management of very complex behaviour, leading to the development of greater self-control. Attendance is good. Issues are addressed individually and good attendance is celebrated. The development of healthy lifestyles is outstanding. The curriculum, and particularly the PSHE aspect, helps pupils develop an admirable awareness of the need for personal care and hygiene. Pupils know that a good diet and involvement in physical exercise lead to healthy living and there are excellent opportunities for a range of sport and fitness activities.

Excellent development of social skills and raising self-esteem, attention to basic skills, provision of vocational opportunities and links with mainstream schools prepare pupils well for their future. Problem solving and team building skills are promoted but there are some missed opportunities for pupils to take the lead or interact with each other in some lessons.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Grade for sixth form: 2

Teaching and learning are good across the school. There are significant strengths in the lessons in the primary phase, where some outstanding teaching was observed. In the secondary department, although teaching and learning are good overall and some lessons have outstanding features, there are more satisfactory lessons than in other phases in the school. Where there is outstanding learning the lessons are purposeful and fun with vibrancy and enthusiasm from pupils and staff. When lessons are satisfactory there is less active engagement of pupils with their learning and they take on a more passive role in class.

Planning consistently identifies what the teacher wants different pupils to learn. This gives a good level of challenge for both academic skills and personal development. There is good emphasis on enabling pupils to work independently or together. Teachers and support staff are skilled in making sure that they do not dominate a pupil's work but that their prompting and encouragement help pupils make good or better progress. Resources are well used to give meaningful and practical ways of learning.

Lessons provide a good balance of time to teaching new knowledge and skills and ensuring pupils can practise and consolidate skills in a wide variety of stimulating contexts both in school and in other settings. There is some very good use of individual communication aids in classes but there is less consistency in the use of signing and symbol communication across the school.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

Grade for sixth form: 2

The curriculum throughout the school is good with some excellent features. The foundation curriculum and primary curriculum are outstanding with excellent cross-curricular links, for example the linking of literacy and geography when finding Barnaby Bear stimulated and excited

pupils. There is a carefully planned rolling programme which ensures continuity and progression. The good secondary curriculum is being developed to link subjects more explicitly whilst retaining age appropriate lessons. The broad curriculum ensures pupils receive their full entitlement in each age phase and it is well matched to pupils' needs. Links with mainstream schools make a significant contribution to the breadth of opportunities. Provision for work-related learning is good and many pupils have very successful work experience opportunities. Curriculum enrichment is excellent because of carefully planned, purposeful visits out of school and visitors to school. Extra-curricular activities provide excellent opportunities for the development of sporting skills, but the uptake of after-school activities is hindered by lack of transport. School council members report that they would all like to take part and, although many staff provide transport, some pupils still do not attend due to transport difficulties. There is a very good take-up of the wide range of lunchtime clubs.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 1

Grade for sixth form: 1

Excellent relationships throughout the school are based on respect and a high level of understanding of pupils' needs. There are high staffing ratios but staff are trained so that their interventions are timely, sensitive and promote a high level of independent learning. Health and welfare needs are very well met through multi-agency working, although one parent was concerned about the low amount of speech and language therapy. Safeguarding meets requirements and as a result of regular updates staff have a very good understanding of child protection procedures. Risk assessments are very thorough. Any incidents are well recorded and evaluated so that action is taken to minimise risk in the future.

Detailed assessment leads to very good advice and academic guidance. The school works well with parents, who contribute effectively to their child's education. There is a high level of involvement in annual reviews from both parents and pupils. Transition arrangements at all stages are highly effective. Pupils usually move on to meaningful placements when they leave school as a result of good guidance and preparation in life skills as well as staff working tirelessly with partners to help school leavers find suitable placements.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

Grade for sixth form: 2

Good leadership and management have led to all staff of this relatively new school having a very good understanding of how they can develop and improve on current practice. Staff training has been very well targeted so that staff are able to address the pupils' wide range of needs. Care, guidance and support are outstanding as a result of careful monitoring and attention to detail. The monitoring cycle is well structured and has highlighted key areas for improvement effectively.

Evaluation of actions shows good progress although the success criteria used at whole school level are not always focused sufficiently on the outcomes for pupils of different ages and levels of need. This reduces the sharp focus required to ensure that current good and very good practice is raised to outstanding.

Resources are well managed and staff deployment is carefully planned to ensure equality of access to opportunities within the school day. The school effectively engages with pupils and parents and acts upon their views. When seeking the views of pupils about a range of aspects of the school, including the quality of lessons, the school uses carefully adapted materials to aid communication.

Governors are clear about their roles and responsibilities at the school and have played a significant part in ensuring stakeholders were involved in the transition from two sites to one. They are instrumental in helping to ensure the school provides good value for money.

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Annex A

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	2
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	2	2
The quality and standards in the Foundation Stage	2	NA
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	NA	NA

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	2	2
The standards ¹ 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

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	2	2
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1	
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	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

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

¹ 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.

Annex A

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	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	

Annex B**Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection**

18 May 2007

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Woodlands School, Coleshill, B46 3JE

Thank you for welcoming me and my colleague to your school. It gave us both great pleasure to meet you and see your work. I would particularly like to thank those of you who met with us. Many of your parents wrote to tell us how good the school is. We found out that you agree, and we agree too. We think it is a good school with some outstanding features.

You work hard and make good progress at school. You enjoy school because most of your lessons are interesting and fun. You are expected to be involved in activities and to work hard at your own level. You behave well at school and we were especially impressed by how you treat one another and make sure school is a calm place where you can all work hard. You develop a very good awareness of how to lead a healthy life, and sporting and fitness opportunities are very popular.

We think the staff at your school know you extremely well. They look after you but also help you to do things for yourselves. It has been a time of change for many of you but the headteacher has made sure that staff have helped you meet this challenge and you have continued to make good progress.

- There are a few things we would like to be even better at your school.
- We would like you and the staff to use signs and symbols more consistently so that all of you can communicate with each other.
- We have asked staff to plan more interesting activities so that all lessons are as motivating as the best ones. I am sure you could help with some good ideas.
- We have also asked the headteacher and governors to make sure they check that everything they do helps all of you to make more progress no matter how much help you need or what age you are.

The school has high hopes for you all and I hope you continue to enjoy your education. Good luck with the move to one site.

Yours sincerely Janet Thompson (on behalf of the inspection team) Her Majesty's Inspector