

Woodlands First and Middle School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	133316
Local Authority	Harrow
Inspection number	301992
Inspection dates	20–21 June 2007
Reporting inspector	Kiran Campbell-Platt

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	3–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	58
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Ms Anne-Marie Taylor-Kent
Headteacher	Mr John Feltham
Date of previous school inspection	19 May 2003
School address	Bransgrove Road Edgware HA8 6JP
Telephone number	020 8421 3637
Fax number	020 8731 2360

Age group	3–11
Inspection dates	20–21 June 2007
Inspection number	301992

© Crown copyright 2007

Website: www.ofsted.gov.uk

This document may be reproduced in whole or in part for non-commercial educational purposes, provided that the information quoted is reproduced without adaptation and the source and date of publication are stated.

Further copies of this report are obtainable from the school. Under the Education Act 2005, the school must provide a copy of this report free of charge to certain categories of people. A charge not exceeding the full cost of reproduction may be made for any other copies supplied.

Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one Additional Inspector.

Description of the school

This is a school for pupils aged 3-11 with Statements of Special Educational Need. Pupils have a range of complex needs including severe learning difficulties (SLD), profound and multiple learning difficulties (PMLD) and a growing proportion with autistic spectrum disorders (ASD). Most pupils come from minority ethnic groups and over half have English as an Additional Language (EAL). The proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals is above average. The school is co-located with a mainstream primary school. The school is part of a cluster of schools which work together towards meeting the Extended schools and Every Child Matters agenda.

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. The headteacher is an effective leader dedicated to improving the school's provision for the well-being of pupils. The leadership team, governors and staff have an ambitious shared vision and a common sense of purpose that permeates the work of the school. This creates a caring ethos where pupils made good progress in learning and achieve well in relation to their learning difficulties. The school has excellent partnerships with therapists and local agencies to meet pupils' needs. This results in outstanding personal development and well-being. Pupils grow in confidence, develop self-help and life skills. They behave very well in lessons and at break-times. The overwhelming majority of parents are very appreciative of its work. One parent commented, 'I am grateful to the school for the great care and attention that is paid to my child.' They praise the staff and say that they are 'always approachable and ever enthusiastic'.

Teaching and learning are good. Good relationships and the highly effective team of learning support staff create a positive ethos for learning in classrooms. Teachers use a good range of activities and resources to engage and motivate pupils. Information and communication technology (ICT) is used well in some classes although not all staff are sufficiently skilled in using interactive whiteboards to make lessons exciting and interesting. Information about what pupils can already do is used well to provide challenging learning targets for individuals.

The curriculum is good overall. It is matched well to the next steps in pupils' learning and to meeting the needs of those with additional difficulties. Provision in the Foundation Stage is outstanding. Children benefit from opportunities to learn in a setting where they receive a high level of support as well as being integrated with mainstream children for creative activities. As a result, they achieve very well in all the areas of learning. Careful attention is paid to developing pupils' basic skills, and to promoting their personal, social and physical development. The school is making good progress in addressing aspects of the curriculum which require improvement, for example, by increasing creative activities for teaching numeracy and developing a scheme of work for ICT across the curriculum. The work to link subjects in themes and to make learning more enjoyable, is beginning to have a positive impact on learning in numeracy. The curriculum is enriched by creative activities, such as music, residential trips and an after-school club. Pupils across the school benefit from short projects to mix socially and academically with mainstream pupils, for example, through a joint story-telling project on Romeo and Juliet, class visits by mainstream pupils and joint assemblies for some groups. Although outdoor facilities for play are good in most respects, there is insufficient play equipment in the playground for some of the older pupils which restricts some outdoor learning activities.

The leadership team and governors are right to be proud of the improved reputation of the school with parents and in the local community. School improvement planning is embedded and used rigorously to identify areas for improvement such as in the curriculum provision for numeracy and ICT, partnership with the co-located school and in outdoor learning environments. The school has correctly judged standards and achievement, curriculum and teaching and learning as good. However, it has underestimated its outstanding care, guidance and support for pupils which results in outstanding personal development and well-being. Resources are well deployed. There have been good improvements since the last inspection. The school has improved its accommodation by relocating to a purpose-built building. The Foundation Stage curriculum is now outstanding and well-based on creative learning activities; governors are now compliant with in all areas of their statutory responsibilities; curriculum co-ordination is

now good. It is managed well by the deputy headteacher and staff are actively involved in curriculum planning and improvement. The school provides good value for money and is well placed to improve further.

What the school should do to improve further

- Make greater use of ICT, especially interactive whiteboards, to make learning exciting and interesting for all pupils.
- Develop the outdoor learning environments for older pupils to promote their learning through play.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Pupils' attainment when they enter the school is low compared with other learners of the same age because of their learning difficulties and complex needs. Although standards are well below average, from their low starting points they make good progress in most subjects of the curriculum. Pupils throughout the school grow in confidence and self-esteem and this enhances their progress in learning. Children in the Nursery make outstanding progress in their communication, social and emotional development. They enjoy the very good opportunities provided for creative and physical development and participate well in small group activities with their mainstream peers. Pupils in Years 1 to 6 make very good gains in improving their language and communication skills. The school has identified that slower progress has been made by pupils in numeracy. Pupils' achievement is good overall because staff help them to participate actively in learning activities by using different ways of communication. In one lesson observed, all pupils made good progress in learning as they used clapping, singing and rapping to greet each pupil in the class in turn. There is no significant difference in the progress made by different groups of learners.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

The pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding. They develop spiritually in thoughtful daily collective worship at the end of the school day, religious education, excellent assemblies, trips to places of worship and fund-raising for charity. They develop socially and culturally through a very good range of curriculum activities such as trips to theatres, art galleries and family-drumming workshops. Pupils greatly enjoy coming to school and this is reflected in good attendance rates. One parent said, 'My child enjoys every minute of school time, you can just see the smile on her face.' The positive ethos and consistent use of positive behaviour management by staff is reflected in pupils' good behaviour. Relationships between pupils and teachers are a strength. Pupils across the school learn about the difference between right and wrong and spiritual and moral issues in religious education and personal, citizenship, social and health education (PCSHE). They behave very safely and are well-supervised in all school activities. They are supported in developing healthy lifestyles through physical activity in lessons and breaks and the healthy and nutritious options offered in school meals. They make a positive contribution to the school and wider community through their participation in activities with their mainstream peers, taking part in assemblies and helping in school activities such as delivering fruit to classrooms. They make very good progress in self-help and independence skills as well as learning to make choices and to express their views which is good preparation for their next stage of education.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Parents rightly comment, 'Teachers have always been creative in finding ways to teach children.' Teachers use a good range of methods and resources to involve pupils and to enable them to understand what they are doing. Staff use questioning effectively so that pupils have opportunities throughout lessons to make choices and express their views and feelings. This promotes their engagement and enjoyment and results in their good achievement. For example, in food technology, pupils chose which of the different fruits they would use to plan and make a fruit salad which they then enjoyed tasting. In a numeracy lesson, the teacher used small buckets and spades as well as pictures and symbols effectively to help pupils to understand numbers and early counting. Some teachers make good use of ICT, including interactive white boards, to add visual and practical examples that help pupils' learning. However, not all staff are sufficiently skilled in using interactive whiteboards for interesting and interactive activities. Teachers plan lessons that build on what pupils have learned before. The well-trained and confident learning support staff work effectively with teachers and play a strong role in promoting inclusion. They help and guide individual pupils to access learning at a level which is appropriate to their ability and needs. Praise is used well to encourage hesitant or less able students. As a result pupils make good progress.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The school provides a good curriculum which is well-matched to the needs of all pupils. The Foundation Stage curriculum is outstanding and provides pupils with a rich range of creative, play-based learning activities. In the rest of the school it is based on the National Curriculum and enriched by a good range of multi-sensory activities and resources which promote learning and contribute the pupils' outstanding personal and social development. Personal, social and health education, citizenship physical education, and creative activities in lessons support the development of communication and social skills and raise pupils' awareness of healthy and safe lifestyles. There is an appropriate curriculum to meet the needs of pupils with Autistic Spectrum Disorder. Other pupils have access to lessons where staff make effective use of a range of alternative communication strategies, including picture exchange communication system, signing and symbols. The good procedures for regular curriculum evaluation which involve all staff, are effective in helping school to identify areas for development, for instance in Numeracy and ICT. The school has improved the curriculum for numeracy by developing topic and themed based work to make learning more creative and enjoyable. It is working to develop a curriculum map and scheme of work for work to enhance the use of ICT across the school. The curriculum is enriched by creative activities, such as music, dance and workshops run by visiting artists.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 1

The staff is highly committed to providing a safe, stimulating and caring environment for pupils. The school works very effectively with a wide range of agencies, including local authority services to meet pupils' needs and to enhance provision. Professionals such as physiotherapists, speech therapist and the occupational therapist play an active role in improving the school's provision to match the needs of the different groups of pupils. They are involved well in

curriculum development and staff training. They also usefully attend parents' evenings. Communication with parents is very good and they comment on the detailed and regular information they receive on their children's progress. The school provides a very good range of services including a full-time healthcare assistant and a dysphasia specialist to meet pupils' medical needs. The well-trained and effective team of learning support assistants are an asset to the school and play a strong role in the outstanding care and access provided to every pupil to the school's activities. Targets on pupils' individual education plans are carefully monitored and evaluated to show the progress that pupils are making towards meeting those targets. The school has introduced a new assessment system which it is using effectively to identify the small steps in learning made by pupils and to improve tracking of progress. There are thorough systems in place that safeguard pupils and include robust risk assessments and checks on adults who work with the pupils. Child protection procedures are very good. There are appropriate health and safety assessments.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

Leadership and management are good. The headteacher is dedicated to whole-school improvement for the benefit of pupils. He is supported by an able senior leadership team who have played a strong role in ensuring that standards and achievement have been maintained during the school's re-location to the new site. The partnership with the co-located primary school is developing well. It enriches curriculum provision and enhances pupils' social development. The school is well-placed to extend this further through regular opportunities for pupils to learn with their mainstream peers. All the issues from the previous inspection have been addressed and improvement since the last inspection is good. The well-developed partnerships with therapists and local agencies contribute highly to the excellent care, guidance and support of pupils. This also results in the excellent personal development and well-being of pupils. Self-review is embedded and information from monitoring of all aspects of the school's work including teaching and learning and curriculum, is used effectively to plan staff training to improve teaching quality. The school seeks the views of pupils, parents and staff to inform its priorities for development through annual surveys. Induction and continuing professional development are a strength. Training opportunities for all staff include an excellent range of learning activities including learning walks, research, peer observation, curriculum development and talks by therapists and other specialists. Curriculum provision is good and well-matched to the needs of the different groups of pupils. There are effective financial systems in place. Governors are very well informed and monitor the work of the school rigorously. They play a strong and strategic role in school improvement. They are well placed to continue their role as 'critical friends' to the leadership team.

Any complaints about the inspection or the report should be made following the procedures set out in the guidance 'Complaints about school inspection', which is available from Ofsted's website: www.ofsted.gov.uk.

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
--	-----------------------

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
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	1
The quality and standards in the Foundation Stage	1
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	2
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	2
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	2
The standards ¹ reached by learners	4
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	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?	1
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1
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	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

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	2
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	2
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	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
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	1
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	1
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
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

2 July 2007

Dear Children

Inspection of Woodlands First and Middle School, Edgware, HA8 6JP

Thank you for making me feel welcome when I visited your school. I enjoyed my visit and now I am writing to let you know what I found out about the school. This is a good school and I can see why most of your parents are so pleased with the way it helps you. I was pleased to see how much you enjoy all the activities that the school offers. Those of you in the Nursery are doing especially well and it was lovely to see you working and playing with the other children there. The rest of you are making good progress with your work, and you benefit from the chance to learn and mix with mainstream pupils. This helps you to get on with a lot of people and also to take part in some exciting activities. Your parents say that you are very happy to attend school and I could see that you are very well cared for. The teachers understand your needs well and they match work well to the next steps in your learning.

The school is led well and the headteacher and staff are very keen to make the school even better for you. To help them to improve things for you, I have asked the headteacher and staff to make better use of interactive white boards in lessons to make learning interesting and exciting, and also to make sure that there is more equipment in the playground for older children to increase the opportunities for playing and learning outside.

Kiran Campbell-Platt (Lead inspector)