

# Pinewood School

## Inspection report

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	117664
<b>Local Authority</b>	Hertfordshire
<b>Inspection number</b>	326657
<b>Inspection dates</b>	29–30 January 2009
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	Trevor Watts

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

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<b>Type of school</b>	Special
<b>School category</b>	Maintained
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	11–16
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number on roll</b>	
School (total)	149
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Mrs Annette Burns
<b>Headteacher</b>	Mr Adrian Lloyd
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	7 February 2006
<b>School address</b>	Hoe Lane Ware Hertfordshire SG12 9PB
<b>Telephone number</b>	01920 412211
<b>Fax number</b>	01920 411100

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<b>Age group</b>	11–16
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## Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

## Description of the school

This is a special school in a residential rural area. It is for students aged 11 to 16 years who have a range of special needs including moderate learning difficulties, emotional and behavioural problems, and needs associated with autism. Three quarters of the students are boys, and the great majority are White British. They come from a wide area with a range of social and economic backgrounds; four are in the care of their local authority. The headteacher has been in post for two years. The school is making an application to become a specialist school for 'Cognition and Learning'.

## Key for inspection grades

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

## Overall effectiveness of the school

### Grade: 2

Pinewood is a good school that has improved well since the previous inspection. The school also considers itself to be good, and is accurate in all of its self-evaluation judgements. Students enjoy their exciting activities very much, and parents praise the school, 'We couldn't be more pleased,' said one, 'my child is always eager to go in.' Students' eagerness is well justified by the good teaching that is mainly well matched to their level of understanding, and by a good selection of subjects that they find interesting. Students become well involved in their learning, whether it is discovering how to use a calculator, how to choose a healthy meal or kayak across a lake. It can be difficult for them to know how well they are making progress because many cannot remember their targets, and teachers do not generally remind them or look back at the end of a lesson to see how well they have been learning. Even so, students learn and achieve well in many academic areas. Many gain certificates and qualifications in nationally recognised courses. The school does not, however, check its existing information to see if, for instance, autistic students achieve well compared with those with severe learning difficulties. Also, it does not compare its assessment information against students in similar schools to see if they are performing well compared to others.

Students' personal development is good. The school has good procedures to safeguard students and its policies reflect the high level of concern and care that staff have for their charges. All students are encouraged and helped to make the most of what the wide range of activities offers, such as the 'forest school' and the information and communication technology rooms. Autistic students, for instance, have experiences of work situations and join in the main classes rather than being in a 'base' all day; students with severe and complex needs might learn to build a shelter in the woods or use the fitness suite.

The application to become a specialist school has given added impetus to the search for further improvements in the curriculum. Leadership and management are good. School developments are heading in a clear direction because the teamwork of the headteacher, senior staff and governors has been so well forged. Even so, school leaders are not complacent: they have many current developments in play, and more in mind for the future.

### What the school should do to improve further

- Make more effective use of existing assessment information about the progress and attainment of different groups of students within the school, and compare it with that of students in similar schools, so that the school can judge its own performance more broadly.
- Ensure that students know and understand how their own targets can help their learning by closer reference to them in lesson objectives and end-of-lesson reviews.

## Achievement and standards

### Grade: 2

Because of the nature of their special educational needs, students attain standards that are well below those of mainstream students of similar age. However, considering the many differing difficulties that they have, students make good progress and achieve well.

Many enter the school in Year 7 with a very low level of skills, such as being unable to read or recognise numbers, and with too few social skills to be able to relate to each other. More able students may be several years behind in their reading, and can do only very basic number

calculations. Students develop their academic, physical, work-related and personal skills well in both key stages.

By the end of Key Stage 4 many are self-assured when speaking and reading in front of their classmates. They use a range of computer-related equipment confidently and have a broad understanding of many different subjects. Students with autism relate to other people much more socially and take part in group activities with encouragement. Many students attain nationally recognised certificates in courses such as the 'Transition Challenge' and 'Functional Skills' within the Award Scheme Development Accreditation Network. They also gain qualifications in Entry Level and full GCSE subjects, including English, mathematics, science and art. Other qualifications obtained include National Vocational Qualification for Food Preparation, Sports Leaders, Swimming and Duke of Edinburgh awards.

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

### **Grade: 2**

Students thoroughly enjoy school and this is reflected in their good attendance and wide participation in school activities, although transport home prevents some students from taking part in after-school events. Many students know how to make healthy choices at school, in particular taking plenty of exercise, although not everyone always chooses the healthy options at lunch. A full trophy cabinet testifies to students' sporting successes. They know well how to keep themselves safe and behaviour is good. Students say that there are rare incidents of bullying but they are dealt with well. Their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good, although their multi-cultural awareness is only satisfactory. Successes are celebrated, and challenging activities such as outdoor and adventurous pursuits give students a strong sense of achievement and build their confidence. They learn to get on well with others and to work in groups and teams. The school offers many opportunities for all students to contribute to their own community, and for some, in the wider community. Students take their responsibilities seriously as house captains and school councillors, and by helping to interview prospective members of staff. In the community, some students act as sports leaders supporting events and many raise funds for children in Africa and Brazil. Students grow to understand and manage their emotions; good support enables students with autism to develop socially appropriate behaviour. The good progress in acquiring basic skills, and many students' growing independence and awareness of the world of work, ensure that students are well prepared for further education and adult life.

## **Quality of provision**

### **Teaching and learning**

#### **Grade: 2**

Positive, friendly and mutually respectful relationships between staff and students are the basis of the good teaching. This is combined with teachers' good knowledge of their students' needs and aptitudes as well as of the subjects they are teaching. Lessons are generally structured well and include several different activities that help to maintain students' interest and their willingness to join in. Mostly, well-prepared resources are used imaginatively to enliven activities, and support staff are mainly used effectively to support the learning of individuals or small groups. Teachers are particularly good at managing students' behaviour through their high expectations and consistent approach. Sometimes, the pace of a lesson declines when, for example, teachers spend too long explaining, or if students have a long wait for their turn.

Often, lessons are well planned to include aspects of several subjects, such as in a topic about pirates that included English, history, art, geography and information and communication technology.

Teachers often begin a lesson well by telling students what the lesson aims are. However, students are frequently not aware of what their own targets are, and teachers do not help them to understand and assess what they have actually learned and how well they have been learning.

## **Curriculum and other activities**

### **Grade: 2**

A broad and relevant range of learning experiences meets students' needs well. Provision for students with autism has a suitable emphasis on personal and social skills with small group and individual sessions, some of which take place in work stations with few distractions. The accommodation is being steadily improved to provide additional space and specialist facilities, such as the fitness room. Resources for information and communication technology are excellent but are not yet used equally well in all subjects. There is good enrichment in the form of well-attended clubs and residential occasions. Visits and visitors add much interest and enjoyment, although few involve multi-cultural events. The 'outdoors' curriculum provides a progressively more challenging set of experiences that start with the 'forest school' on the school site and progress to adventurous experiences and outdoor pursuits such as climbing, caving and canoeing off the school site. These provide a spirit of adventure and build confidence and independence skills. Older students benefit from accredited vocational courses at the local college and work experience. Students who are not able to take part in individual work experience go on group 'experience of work' days instead. The range of external accreditation is being increased progressively to ensure that students of all abilities leave school with recognition of their achievements.

## **Care, guidance and support**

### **Grade: 2**

Parents are confident that their children are well cared for as pastoral care is good. Systems for safeguarding students meet government requirements at the time of the inspection. Students' welfare, health and safety have a high profile. Risks are carefully assessed and action is taken to minimise them. Supervision is good and staff are all trained in dealing with occasional outbursts of challenging behaviour.

Staff build good working relationships with students, who feel safe in school and secure in the knowledge that they will get the help they need personally or academically. The student support centre provides a good range of additional support for vulnerable students and there is a trained counsellor. Staff are well trained in matters relating to students' welfare and safety. They work constructively with professionals from outside the school to ensure that help is always available from many sources. The 'house' system is greatly valued by students, who appreciate the rewards that go with earning points. Where needed, students have individual plans to help them develop more appropriate behaviour and they know well what their behaviour targets are. Many, however, are much less sure what their targets are in English and mathematics because teachers tend not to refer to them very often.

## Leadership and management

### Grade: 2

The headteacher provides strong and effective leadership, very ably supported and challenged by a clear-thinking and enthusiastic team of senior leaders and governors. This has resulted in a good improvement since the previous inspection, strongly indicating the school's good capacity to improve further. Capable and experienced governors bring many valuable skills to the school and expect the school's proposals to be fully justified. Many good partnerships with outside providers have been built up to enrich students' therapeutic, social, educational and vocational opportunities.

The overall direction of the school is solidly established through good self-challenging teamwork within the leadership team. The application to become a specialist school is helped by the school's present status as 'hub' school for sharing skills and information within a large local group of schools. It is largely based on developing the provision for autistic students and reviewing the whole curriculum to see if there are better ways to meet students' needs. Leaders have created a very harmonious sense of community within the school, and, largely through their many links with other schools, are extending this cohesion into the wider community well. Accurate self-evaluation is seen in the appropriate steps that have been taken to improve some areas of what the school does, such as English, wider communications skills and outdoor pursuits education. Leaders manage and deploy the school's finances, staff and other resources well to achieve their aims. Extensive staff training appropriately covers new curriculum demands, students' changing needs and statutory requirements.

Leaders focus clearly on raising standards across the range of students' needs. However, they do not use existing assessment information sufficiently to judge the progress and attainment of different groups of students, nor do they compare students' attainment with that of students in similar schools.

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## Annex A

## Inspection judgements

Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate	School Overall
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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
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well being?	2
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	2

### Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	2
The standards <sup>1</sup> 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/or disabilities make progress	2

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<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.

## Personal development and well-being

<b>How good are the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?</b>	2
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2
The extent to which learners enjoy their education	2
The attendance of learners	2
The behaviour of learners	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 learners' needs?</b>	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?	2

## Leadership and management

<b>How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?</b>	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 leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	2
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	2
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination eliminated	2
How well does the school contribute to community cohesion?	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
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**

2 February 2009

Dear Students

Inspection of Pinewood School, Hoe Lane, Ware, Hertfordshire, SG12 9PB

I am sure you will remember when two inspectors visited your school for two days recently. I would like to thank you all for welcoming us so warmly, talking to us and helping us.

We found that you go to a good school where the teachers work hard to make many different things happen for you, whatever difficulties you may have. You told us that you enjoy coming to school, and joining in so many of the different activities such as in the 'forest school', canoeing, reading and having the chance to go to work experiences. Staff are careful to make sure you are safe in school, and you told us that you know who to go to if you have problems. You make good progress in your class work, your physical skills and learning how to get along together. You know about being healthy, staying safe and exercising.

Mr Lloyd has made many good changes since he came, but he does not work alone: he has many senior teachers and members of the governing body to help him in different ways. They are doing a good job. Since the school was last inspected, we think it has improved well, and this makes us think that it will carry on improving. The senior people in school have good plans for what they want to do.

There are two things that we think the school should do to help its improvements.

- The first is for teachers to remind you more often of your learning targets in the main subjects, and, at the end of lessons, to help you to see how well you have been learning.
- Secondly, we would like the school to check how well groups of students who have similar sorts of difficulties are making progress, and then to see how that compares with students in other schools like yours.

With my best wishes

Trevor Watts

Lead inspector