

# The Woodlands School

## Inspection report

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	121770
<b>Local Authority</b>	North Yorkshire
<b>Inspection number</b>	327562
<b>Inspection dates</b>	12–13 May 2009
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	Elizabeth Godman

This inspection of the school was carried out under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.  
The registered childcare, managed by the governing body, was inspected under section 49 of the Childcare Act 2006.

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<b>Boarding provision</b>	
<b>Social care URN</b>	
<b>Social care inspector</b>	Michael McCleave

The inspection of social care was carried out under the Care Standards Act 2000.

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<b>Type of school</b>	Special
<b>School category</b>	Community special
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	2–16
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number on roll</b>	
School (total)	84
Government funded early education provision for children aged 3 to the end of the EYFS	0
Childcare provision for children aged 0 to 3 years	0
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Mr J Aston
<b>Headteacher</b>	Mrs A Fearn
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	1 February 2006
<b>Date of previous funded early education inspection</b>	Not previously inspected

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<b>Age group</b>	2–16
<b>Inspection dates</b>	12–13 May 2009
<b>Inspection number</b>	327562

**Date of previous childcare inspection**

**School address**

Not previously inspected

Woodlands Drive

Scarborough

North Yorkshire

YO12 6QN

**Telephone number**

01723 373260

**Fax number**

01723 371715

**Age group** 2-16

**Inspection dates** 12-13 May 2009

**Inspection number** 327562

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## Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one additional inspector and one social care inspector.

## Description of the school

Woodlands School caters for pupils with autistic spectrum disorders, moderate and severe learning difficulties, and speech, language and communication difficulties. A majority have additional or associated behavioural or physical difficulties. All have a statement of special educational need. The nature of the pupils' difficulties means they are working well below national expectations. Most pupils are of White British heritage. Pupils attend from a range of social and economic backgrounds and from across a wide geographical area. The school is designated to provide for pupils from the age of two who are catered for in a class of older children. Governors are responsible for boarding provision in the hostel where a number of pupils stay overnight for one or two nights each week. The headteacher's appointment became permanent in April 2009, following a period since September 2007 when she held the post in an acting capacity.

## Key for inspection grades

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

## Overall effectiveness of the school

### Grade: 1

Woodlands is an outstanding school. An overwhelming majority of parents and carers, who completed the questionnaire, agree with comments such as, 'we could not recommend this school highly enough,' and, 'an outstanding school in every respect'. The headteacher's clear vision and exceptional commitment have been major factors in driving forward the school's development and in securing the rapid and embedded improvement which has taken place since the last inspection. The headteacher receives excellent support from a very able leadership team who share these very high expectations.

As a result, during their time at the school, pupils make excellent progress from very low starting points on entry. Their achievement is outstanding. Pupils' progress is particularly strong in communication, independence, and personal and social development because of the school's strong emphasis on these skills. There are no variations in progress between pupils with different learning difficulties and/or disabilities. This is because pupils' needs are assessed very accurately and activities are planned with great precision to ensure that each pupil learns as rapidly as possible.

Pupils' personal development and well-being is outstanding. Pupils are constantly overcoming their difficulties and gaining in their understanding of the needs and rights of others. They participate very readily in different cultural activities. Their behaviour is outstanding and many go out of their way to be friendly and polite to one another, staff and visitors. This excellent behaviour stems from the very well-established routines and boundaries, which largely prevent difficulties from arising. Most pupils say that they love school. They respond very well to the high expectations staff have of them and have very good attitudes to learning because lessons and activities are varied and interesting. Most attend regularly because they greatly enjoy school.

The consistently high quality of teaching ensures pupils' outstanding learning and enjoyment. A very good variety of teaching techniques, highly suited to pupils' particular learning difficulties and/or disabilities, gives the right degree of challenge for success and rapid progress. Teaching assistants make a substantial contribution to this excellent teaching. When leading a small group or individual activity they are most successful in enabling the achievement of the pupils in their group. The outstanding curriculum builds extremely well on pupils' prior attainment because it is very carefully planned and constructed to meet the specific needs of each pupil. Staff show very high levels of care for pupils. This safeguards pupils' welfare securely. All the government's safeguarding requirements are met. All pupils, irrespective of their different learning difficulties and/or disabilities, benefits from this outstanding care. Academic guidance is very good.

Equality of opportunity is promoted exceptionally well and discrimination is eliminated. Consequently, mutual respect for others is highly evident. The school's promotion of community cohesion is outstanding. It extends pupils' understanding of their own and other cultures and communities most effectively and also successfully helps the wider community to understand pupils and their needs. The school's strong track record of improvement to date, its excellent leadership, accurate self-evaluation and pupils' outstanding achievement give it outstanding capacity to improve further.

## **Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage**

### **Grade: 1**

Provision for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage is outstanding. Children at this stage are currently taught in a class alongside other pupils in Key Stage 1. The needs of all of the pupils in the group are such that the approaches used are highly effective in enabling them to settle well and to participate as much as possible in group activities. This supports communication, language and personal, social and emotional development extremely well. Outdoor provision is of a high quality and accessible to children as the need arises. All the staff play a key and highly effective role in promoting children's learning, development and welfare. The leadership and management of the provision is outstanding, with exceptionally well-organised activities and resources. Detailed records are kept and used well to plan the next steps for each child.

## **Effectiveness of boarding provision**

### **Grade: 2**

The quality of boarding at Woodlands is good. The school meets all of the key and most of the other National Minimum Standards.

The promotion of equality and diversity in the hostel is good. The school has a very positive approach to equality and diversity, and information about different cultures and religions is clearly evidenced throughout the school. The young people are taught to show respect for each other and to tolerate differences. There is a strong sense of community in the hostel and the young people are encouraged to treat each other with respect and to show tolerance of those who may be different. Good clear policies underpin the work of the hostel and information is provided to parents and the young people who use this facility.

There is a strong commitment from the management team continually to improve the operation of the hostel, and steps have been taken to comply with most the recommendations made at the last inspection. There is, however, still an issue over funding to refurbish some of the bathrooms. The head of care has yet to undertake training in management and not all staff have the National Vocational Qualification (NVQ) at level 3 in caring for children and young people.

The promotion of health is excellent and there is an underlying ethos of encouraging healthy living among the young people. There is an efficient medicines administration procedure and records are appropriately maintained. All care staff have been trained to administer medicines and they are kept up to date on each young person's health care needs by the school doctor and nurse who visit the school on a regular basis. Although the responsibility for health matters remains with parents, the young people enjoy good nutritionally balanced meals. The chef has an excellent approach to ensuring that meals are based on a healthy diet with vegetables, fruit and salads available every meal time. 'They are my customers and it is vital I know if they enjoy the meals I prepare'. The views of the young people are sought on the quality of the meals informally each day. Some commented that the meals are 'nice', 'lovely' and 'great food'. Menus displayed around the school make excellent use of symbols and pictures to inform the young people what food is to be served each day. This demonstrates a very good approach to equality and diversity awareness. The young people are encouraged to engage in active pursuits out of school time. They develop gardening skills and grow their own vegetables. This produce is harvested and prepared for meals.

Safeguarding is given a high priority and there are positive links with the Local Safeguarding Children Board (LSCB). This is the responsibility of the headteacher. Staff are clear about their individual responsibilities and they have a clear understanding of child protection procedures. There are effective links between the teaching and care staff, to ensure that any concerns about the welfare of any young person are reported. All care staff have received training in child protection awareness, although this training has not been extended to the domestic staff. Fire evacuation drills are carried out once a term. However, fire risk assessments have been contracted out by the council and the assessments have not yet been received at the school. Information about restraints used is recorded in a generic log and not in a separate bound and numbered book.

The hostel affords the young people excellent opportunities to develop personal and social skills. They are encouraged to engage in challenging activities which not only tests their abilities but, in addition, enhance their self confidence. The hostel staff support the young people to participate in a wide range of activities ranging from the Gateway project, outward bound adventure activities, sports and camping. These experiences gained by the young people who stay in the hostel are clearly reflected in their improved self-confidence and motivation at the school.

The young people are actively encouraged to contribute to the life of the school and hostel both formally and informally through the school council, circle groups, meetings and discussions during the evening meals. It is clear that staff work as a team to encourage a community spirit among the young people and to motivate and challenge them to be fully involved in all areas of hostel activities. Relationships between staff and young people are warm, friendly and trusting. It is clearly evident that young people using the hostel value the time when they stay over and thoroughly enjoy the experience. The young people are polite and show respect towards each other, reflecting the ethos of tolerance and friendship.

The standard of the residential accommodation is satisfactory. Although the social areas and bedrooms are brightly decorated and comfortably furnished, some bathrooms show signs of wear and damage. The walls throughout the hostel are adorned with photographs of young people enjoying themselves participating in the numerous activities that take place. The large grounds surrounding the school and hostel enable the young people to enjoy outdoor activities, such as games and camping during good weather conditions.

Staff demonstrate a positive commitment to their work with the young people and they are supported by management to develop their professional skills. Some staff do not have appropriate qualifications in the care of children and management. However, senior managers have plans to rectify this. Staff feel well supported by their manager and each member of staff receives formal supervision and appraisal. The numbers of staff on duty are sufficient to meet the needs of the young people and a senior manager is on call should assistance be required. Recruitment of all staff follows the local authority procedures which have been reviewed in respect of staff appointments and clearance by the Criminal Records Bureau (CRB).

The school governors are positive in their support for the work carried out in the hostel and take an active interest in the activities of the young people. This short-stay residential facility at the school is very much appreciated by parents and young people.

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

- Ensure that the boarding provision meets the National Minimum Standards.

- There are no other areas for improvement additional to those already identified by the school in its planning.

National Minimum Standards (NMS) to be met to improve social care.

- Ensure that a record of physical intervention on a child is kept in a separate bound and numbered book (NMS 10.14).
- Provide adequate good-quality and well-maintained accommodation for boarding pupils (NMS 24.1).
- Ensure that all staff have the opportunity to undertake relevant training, in particular that the head of care has a professional qualification relevant to management and working with children, which must be either NVQ at level 4 or the Diploma in Social Work (NMS 31.2).

## **Achievement and standards**

### **Grade: 1**

Highly consistent and very effective and structured approaches mean that the youngest pupils and those new to the school settle very quickly when they start. As a result, they are soon ready to learn and participate with increasing eagerness. Pupils with severe communication difficulties make great gains in confidence and in expressing themselves by using signs, symbols and spoken words. Those who find social interaction very challenging grow considerably in their tolerance of such situations and are increasingly prepared to take part in activities alongside or with other adults and pupils. Pupils gain much in their independence because of the excellent opportunities to develop this in their work and other school activities. Pupils' use of information and communication technology (ICT) has improved considerably since the last inspection and they now make very good progress in developing skills in this area. Higher-attaining pupils progress very well in the development of speaking and listening, literacy and numeracy skills. They learn to apply these skills effectively in different contexts, such as handling money, researching on the internet or in recording their findings after an activity. The school accredits pupils' achievements through the Award Scheme Development and Accreditation Network (ASDAN) scheme bronze award and pupils show great pride in building their portfolios for this. Pupils in Years 10 and 11 are gaining many useful skills for later life, such as organising their own activities and possessions, growing vegetables and cooking. This enables them to practise these skills confidently and to a high standard before applying them at home or in the workplace or community.

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

### **Grade: 1**

Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding. They take great care of the natural environment, showing high levels of care for plants, animals and one another. Pupils clearly know the benefits of healthy eating and are prepared to try something different and make good choices at mealtimes. There is a very good response to the opportunities for physical exercise, whether in physical education lessons, in SAQ (speed, agility and quickness) sessions or when working in the garden. Pupils are keen to take part in dance or in competitive football or swimming with other mainstream and special schools. They say they feel very safe in lessons, around school and when playing because of the sensible and mature actions of the great majority of pupils. When behavioural outbursts do occur, related to pupils' learning difficulties and/or disabilities, they are handled very sensitively, minimising the effects and the distress for pupils. Pupils say that bullying is very rare but they know where to turn for



help if they need it. Pupils make an excellent contribution to the school and to the local community. They take very good care of the school grounds, raise funds for charities and show great confidence in their preparedness to give public performances. Pupils develop a very good understanding of skills for life and for the workplace through activities such as the café and work experience. This, their excellent progress in communication and social skills and the way in which they learn to manage their own behaviour and anxieties prepare them extremely well for the future.

## **Quality of provision**

### **Teaching and learning**

#### **Grade: 1**

Extremely lively teaching and very well-chosen and varied activities secure and maintain very high levels of involvement. This is particularly so during the very well-planned and fast-paced intensive morning sessions. The progress of each pupil is monitored closely in lessons so that tasks are modified as necessary or follow up is planned for the next lesson. There is an excellent balance between independent and collaborative work, which promotes personal and social skills and work habits most effectively. All staff have an excellent knowledge of pupils and this ensures that they get the very best from them. Every use is made of the opportunities that arise to extend pupils' learning. At snack times or in practical lessons, such as design and technology, staff constantly promote pupils' use of communication, language and numeracy skills. Pupils' behaviour is managed calmly and effectively and this secures rapid improvement and increasing involvement of those pupils with more challenging behaviour. Teaching assistants provide excellent support, for example through very good signing, gesture and clear speech, which ensures the full involvement of all pupils in lessons and activities.

### **Curriculum and other activities**

#### **Grade: 1**

The curriculum is planned to include activities to overcome the barriers to learning which arise from pupils' particular learning difficulties and/or disabilities. This is seen in the strong emphasis on communication, independence and social interaction as well as in physical education and practical subjects. The school makes very good use of the local environment to extend pupils' experiences and for them to learn to respond flexibly in different circumstances and social situations. The curriculum is enriched by a variety of visits, visitors and residential experiences, both on and off the school site. Pupils attend lessons in a mainstream school where this is appropriate, which increases their progress and develops markedly their social skills and confidence. The curriculum gives pupils a very good grounding in literacy, numeracy, and information and communication technology, but most importantly helps them to make links and practise their skills in a very wide range of practical contexts, such as the garden, the café or in art and design technology. This applied and very practical approach prepares pupils most effectively for their future learning and lives.

### **Care, guidance and support**

#### **Grade: 1**

The school does all it can to promote good attendance. The high levels of care and the motivating and interesting activities mean that pupils are very eager to come to school. The school makes very good use of external agencies, including speech and language and occupational therapists,

and the learning disabilities service. This helps pupils to make excellent progress, particularly in relation to their behaviour, communication and independence skills. Ongoing feedback and gentle prompts keep pupils on track at all times. Pupils also receive very good advice which helps them to make the right choices for the future based on a realistic understanding of their talents and skills. For example, some of the older pupils aspire to be gardeners, caterers or to work in childcare as a direct result of the opportunities provided by the school and the sense of pride and success they have achieved from these experiences. The excellent attention given to pupils' physical, medical and emotional needs ensures that they feel very safe and show very high levels of trust in the adults who care for them.

## **Leadership and management**

### **Grade: 1**

The leadership team's highly accurate and most rigorous school self-evaluation has been used to identify what the school does well and how it could improve further. Any relative weaknesses are acted upon swiftly. Outstanding practice is widely shared. The exceptionally strong practitioners provide mentorship to other staff. This has ensured the rapid spread of consistent effective practice throughout the school. Challenging targets are set for each pupil. Progress towards them is closely monitored so that they can be adjusted to provide exactly the right degree of challenge and ensure the excellent progress of each pupil. The school's commitment to equality of opportunity, eliminating discrimination and community cohesion is seen in the positive benefits for pupils of the wide range of visits, visitors from different cultures and links with an orphanage in Nepal, for example. Additionally, autism awareness days run by the school have been attended by hundreds of people from the local community. When pupils travel independently they carry a pupil passport which explains their learning difficulties and/or disabilities, so that people they meet understand their behaviour and how to communicate with them effectively. The large numbers of staff are deployed most effectively to provide the best for pupils. This is a key factor in the outstanding achievement and, while costly, gives outstanding value for money. The highly effective governors know the school very well and are very supportive and committed. They also provide challenge and a clear and successful focus on continuing school improvement.

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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?	1
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?	1
The effectiveness of boarding provision	2
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	1

### Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

How effective is the provision in meeting the needs of children in the EYFS?	1
How well do children in the EYFS achieve?	IE <sup>2</sup>
How good are the overall personal development and well-being of the children in the EYFS?	IE <sup>2</sup>
How effectively are children in the EYFS helped to learn and develop?	1
How effectively is the welfare of children in the EYFS promoted?	1
How effectively is provision in the EYFS led and managed?	1

### Achievement and standards

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

<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.

<sup>2</sup>IE - denotes that insufficient evidence was available to inspectors for a judgement to be made.

## Personal development and well-being

<b>How good are the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?</b>	1
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	1
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	1
The extent to which learners enjoy their education	1
The attendance of learners	2
The behaviour of learners	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	1

## The quality of provision

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

## Leadership and management

<b>How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?</b>	1
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 leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	1
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	1
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination eliminated	1
How well does the school contribute to community cohesion?	1
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	1
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	1
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**

Thank you for the welcome you gave to my colleague and me when we came to inspect your school. A special thank you goes to those of you who came to talk with me or who spoke with my colleague in the hostel. I know that some of you love talking to other people, but for some of you that is a great challenge which you met very well. Those of you I met in the bungalow café, whether as staff or customers, deserve a mention because the service was excellent and everyone was so grown up, polite and friendly. You told me how much you enjoy school and how very interesting the activities are. This is because they are very practical and help to give you skills which will be very useful later on in life, whether at home, at work or out in the community. You also said that the staff are very good at teaching you to do things independently and how exceptionally well they care for you and keep you safe. As you said, your parents say 'wow' when they see how much progress you are making. I agree with you and your parents that Woodlands is an outstanding school.

You know much about healthy eating, growing tasty vegetables in the garden and joining in different sports and exercise. You also enjoy a little treat from time to time like the lovely waffles and cream that some of you ordered in the café! You take very good care of one another and get along very well together. It is very good that you help each other, for example when someone is too shy to speak or when they are upset. It is also impressive that some of the older pupils help and play with the little ones at lunchtimes. I did not meet those of you who went camping at East Barnby but I am sure you had a good time.

Your headteacher and all the staff ensure that everything runs very smoothly and they are working very hard to make the school as good as it can possibly be for you. They know what they need to do for this. We have just asked them to improve some things in the hostel because we know how much you enjoy your time there and how well it is helping you to become more confident and independent.