

Woodlands Secondary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	109744
Local Authority	Luton
Inspection number	337362
Inspection dates	3–4 December 2009
Reporting inspector	Jackie Cousins

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	11–19
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in the sixth form	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	142
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	35
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Councillor Don Worlding
Headteacher	Sheila Read
Date of previous school inspection	5 April 2007
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by two additional inspectors. The inspectors visited 10 lessons and held meetings with the headteacher, governors, senior leadership team, additional needs coordinator, middle leaders and staff. They talked to a group of students from the school council. The inspectors observed the school's work and looked at some documentation including the safeguarding policy, risk assessments, care plans and records. The school development plan was studied in detail. An analysis was made of school data on students' progress, and inspectors looked at students' work in books and on display. A scrutiny of 30 parent and carers' questionnaires, together with those from some students and staff was carried out.

The inspection team reviewed many aspects of the school's work. It looked in detail at the following:

- how effectively do leaders' monitor the progress and attainment of girls in Key Stage 4
- how well has the accreditation system for subjects including art and information and communication technology (ICT) been developed in the sixth form
- how good is attendance and how successfully is it monitored
- how well is the school using feedback to students to increase their rate of progress
- how effectively is the school's leadership working to develop students' understanding of the United Kingdom's multi-cultural community, especially through music and art.

Information about the school

Woodlands Secondary School teaches students with significant special educational needs and/or disabilities. All have profound and multiple or severe learning difficulties and 40% are on the autistic spectrum. The majority of students are from White British backgrounds. Four out of ten are from minority ethnic groups or speak English as an additional language. The school has awards for Healthy Schools, ICT Mark, Inclusion Quality Mark and Investors in People. The sixth form has the Leading Aspect Award for good practice in promoting students' personal development.

Inspection grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory, and 4 is inadequate

Please turn to the glossary for a description of the grades and inspection terms

Inspection judgements

Overall effectiveness: how good is the school?

2

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

2

Main findings

Woodlands Secondary School is a good place to learn. One significant strength is the partnership to promote students' learning and well-being. An outstanding approach to developing students' self-confidence is due to extremely thoughtful use of positive comments from staff, and activities which make students feel good about their work in school. For instance, morning registration time is used very sensitively to ask students what work or actions they are proud of. Students form very good relationships with staff. The school works incredibly successfully with other agencies to support students with considerable medical needs.

Outcomes for students are outstanding. Students' behaviour is exemplary and they are extremely thoughtful to each other. Their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding. This is due to the fact that the school's leadership treats every student as an individual. As a result, those from different backgrounds and abilities are involved successfully in learning and school life. Students settle rapidly, whether they join in Year 7 or other in year groups. This is because the school engages outstandingly well with parents. Nearly all parents and carers who sent in a questionnaire were very positive about how well their children are prepared for their future life and their achievements. One parent summed up the views of many by saying, 'My child has progressed so much since attending Woodlands. All staff are always approachable and very helpful, no matter what the problem is.'

The school's leadership gives a great deal of importance to assessing students carefully. As a result of this, and the good quality of teaching, students progress well in the main school and sixth form. Staff use a wide variety of multi-sensory teaching methods, which is a considerable improvement since the last inspection. Occasionally, teachers do not explain fully what they are expecting from students and so students do not know what skills or knowledge the staff are looking for. Students' personal targets are not discussed in detail in lessons throughout the week so they do not know what strategies they can use to meet them. Some students' targets are rather broad and this is because these personal targets are not monitored consistently.

The headteacher's leadership is outstanding. She is highly committed and inspires staff successfully. Considerable improvements since the last inspection include the use of a high quality tracking system from Years 7 to 11 in all areas of learning. The evaluation of this tracking system, however, is not fully developed. This means that, each term, meetings to evaluate students' achievement do not record in full what proportion of the group have made expected or better progress or set out the strategies, in detail, which could be used to support those making slower progress. Nevertheless, self-evaluation is used successfully by senior leaders, middle leaders and governors and so the school is in

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a good position to sustain improvement in the future.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- – Develop the consistency of teaching, ensuring all lessons contain these features:
 - detailed discussion so that students know what skills and outcomes the teacher is expecting them to use
 - good quality discussion about students' targets which will ensure that they know what they have done well and what they can do to improve their work.
- Enhance monitoring undertaken by senior leaders by:
 - ensuring every term they celebrate more formally all the students who have made expected or better progress and record in detail the strategies which will be used to support those progressing more slowly
 - making sure all students' personal targets are specific and measurable.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

1

Although attainment is low, because of students' high level of need and very low starting points, their achievement is good and they make good progress. Over the last three years, most students at the school made at least expected progress and a significant proportion achieve well in key areas of learning. This mirrors the picture seen by inspectors. Senior leaders analyse different groups of students' progress carefully. For example, they are clear that girls' progress is similar to boys in relation to their starting points. From school data and observations of lessons it is clear that students with profound and multiple learning difficulties achieve well. Those with various levels of autism progress well because of good staff expertise in this area. Students from minority ethnic groups, and those speaking English as an additional language, are provided for successfully and so they achieve well. By Year 11, all students gain accredited qualifications. Attainment of students by the end of Year 11 was not judged by inspectors because many students have significant special educational needs and/or disabilities.

Students contribute to the community extremely well. For example, students in the school council very successfully joined in discussions to consider how school lunches could be improved. The choir sing and sign in various locations in the area, including local schools. Students learn to value everyone wherever they come from. Their knowledge of their multi-cultural society is developing well because special events are used thoughtfully, as well as the music and art curriculum, to promote their awareness. They have positive attitudes to learning and concentrate successfully in lessons. Students' attendance and punctuality are good. They cooperate with others effectively and take part in enterprise activities successfully. This means that they are well prepared for their future lives. Students' moral development is good and they have a very good understanding of right and wrong. They take on safe ways of working

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together outstandingly. For example, students handle equipment very thoughtfully and know extremely effectively about what to do if they feel they are in an unsafe situation. This is due to careful guidance from staff. Students adopt healthy lifestyles well. A high proportion of students take part in physical exercise activities each week. They are knowledgeable about foods which are better for them and those which should not be eaten too often.

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	2
Taking into account: Pupils' attainment ¹	*
The quality of pupils' learning and their progress	2
The quality of learning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress	2
The extent to which pupils feel safe	1
Pupils' behaviour	1
The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community	1
The extent to which pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	2
Taking into account: Pupils' attendance ¹	2
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1

How effective is the provision?

Teaching is good and so students achieve well in their learning. In lessons observed, the best teaching uses practical teaching methods to ensure that students develop their key skills well. In one outstanding session seen, students who found learning more difficult learned very successfully about craters on the moon because they helped to make models of them using a wide variety of resources. More able students were challenged

¹ The grades for attainment and attendance are: 1 is high; 2 is above average; 3 is broadly average; and 4 is low.

* In some special schools inspectors do not make a judgement about attainment in relation to expectations of the pupils' age.

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very effectively and so they used resources to find out about the planets in detail. Assessment is used consistently to plan lessons and extra support for students. Occasionally, staff do not share highly specific learning objectives and so different groups of students are not clear what skills they are expected to utilise. Students' targets are not referred to regularly in lessons. This means that students do not have an in-depth knowledge of what they can do to improve their work.

A high emphasis is given in the school's curriculum to the development of language, literacy, numeracy and science skills. Most weeks, students have two physical activity sessions, including swimming and ball skills sessions. They develop creative skills through music and art activities. For example, students learn to sing Christmas songs effectively and dance in front of a large audience. The students' personal, social and emotional development is supported extremely well through group discussion and relaxation sessions. Students learn about their own and other's beliefs in assemblies and religious education sessions due to the fact that these are planned well. Multi-sensory activities are consistently used to deepen students' understanding.

Students receive outstanding levels of care from staff. Induction into school life is well thought-out. Students' personal needs are met very successfully due to the fact that plans for their care are of an excellent quality. All students spoken to said they had someone they could talk to if they had a concern or a worry because staff are very attentive. Students with medical problems are cared for extremely considerately. Students whose circumstances have made them vulnerable are identified and supported really well. The school works thoughtfully with agencies to support students' well-being. Due to this, a high emphasis is given to promoting their mental health. Students' attendance is monitored rigorously. The school's work with families ensures parents and carers can access training and can support their children's needs effectively.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The quality of teaching	2
Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	2
The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships	2
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	1

How effective are leadership and management?

The senior leadership team is dedicated to enhancing provision at the school. School development planning sets clear direction for future improvements each year in the quality of teaching and learning. Students have equal opportunities to learn because the school works rigorously to do away with any barriers to learning. This is because senior leaders have high expectations and work thoughtfully to meet students' individual needs. Students' achievement is monitored throughout the year by senior leaders and

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teaching staff. A detailed record of progress meetings is not created, however, and so leaders are not clear which students make expected or better progress. Nor do senior leaders or staff consistently identify the strategies which could be used to increase the rate of progress for a few students who make less than expected progress. The leadership for students' with additional needs is good but individual education plans created by teachers are not always carefully monitored and so a few do not contain specific and measurable targets.

Governors work efficiently with staff and challenge the school well. They are involved successfully in strategic planning for the future. They make sure security and health and safety matters are dealt with carefully. Safeguarding procedures meet requirements well. For example, all staff receive regular training in child protection and thorough records are kept of the checks completed on staff.

The school works successfully to unite the school and wider community. For example, students successfully raise money for charities which support people who face particular challenges in various parts of the world. The school has evaluated all aspects of community cohesion appropriately and is developing further links to enhance students' understanding of different areas in the United Kingdom.

These are the grades for leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	2
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	2
The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met	2
The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers	1
The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being	1
The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	2
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	2
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	2

Sixth form

Students make good progress from Years 12 to 14. All students gain accredited qualifications in various areas of learning. They successfully take part in enterprise activities such as organising and managing events. For example, one project develops

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their knowledge of how to raise money from planning and holding coffee mornings. Students use art and ICT skills successfully in a variety of projects and gain useful qualifications in these areas of learning. They develop their communication skills well when they take part in Christmas productions. Students successfully take part in work experience activities within the school. Sixth form provision is well managed and the leader is clear about ways to develop students' achievement further. For example, the school has just started to enhance the analysis of students' progress by comparing their achievements to similar groups found nationally.

These are the grades for the sixth form

Overall effectiveness of the sixth form	2
Taking into account:	
Outcomes for students in the sixth form	2
The quality of provision in the sixth form	2
Leadership and management of the sixth form	2

Views of parents and carers

An outstanding partnership is in place between parents and carers and the school. The majority of parents and carers who returned the Ofsted questionnaire were positive about the school and the progress their children are making. Parents and carers strongly agree that their children are safe in school. A few parents and carers expressed concern about ways that the school helps them to support their children. The school has recently sent out its own questionnaire to parents and carers and plans to further develop the use of homework to support the involvement of students, parents and carers in learning outside school session times.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Woodlands Secondary School to complete a questionnaire about their views of the school.

In the questionnaire, parents and carers were asked to record how strongly they agreed with 13 statements about the school. The inspection team received 30 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 142 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	21	70	9	30	0	0	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	22	73	8	27	0	0	0	0
The school informs me about my child's progress	20	67	10	33	0	0	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	17	57	11	37	2	7	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	18	60	12	40	0	0	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	17	57	10	33	3	10	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	19	63	10	33	0	0	0	0
The school makes sure that my child is well prepared for the future (for example changing year group, changing school, and for children who are finishing school, entering further or higher education, or entering employment)	21	70	8	27	0	0	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	20	67	10	33	0	0	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	19	63	10	33	0	0	0	0
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	20	67	8	27	2	7	0	0
The school is led and managed effectively	18	60	10	33	0	0	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	20	67	9	30	0	0	0	0

The table above summarises the responses that parents and carers made to each statement. The percentages indicate the proportion of parents and carers giving that response out of the total number of completed questionnaires. Where one or more parents and carers chose not to answer a particular question, the percentages will not add up to 100%.

Glossary

What inspection judgements mean

Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	These features are highly effective. An outstanding school provides exceptionally well for its pupils' needs.
Grade 2	Good	These are very positive features of a school. A school that is good is serving its pupils well.
Grade 3	Satisfactory	These features are of reasonable quality. A satisfactory school is providing adequately for its pupils.
Grade 4	Inadequate	These features are not of an acceptable standard. An inadequate school needs to make significant improvement in order to meet the needs of its pupils. Ofsted inspectors will make further visits until it improves.

Overall effectiveness of schools inspected between September 2007 and July 2008

Type of school	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Nursery schools	39	58	3	0
Primary schools	13	50	33	4
Secondary schools	17	40	34	9
Sixth forms	18	43	37	2
Special schools	26	54	18	2
Pupil referral units	7	55	30	7
All schools	15	49	32	5

New school inspection arrangements were introduced on 1 September 2009. This means that inspectors now make some additional judgements that were not made previously.

The data in the table above were reported in The Annual Report of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills 2007/08.

Percentages are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100. Secondary school figures include those that have sixth forms, and sixth form figures include only the data specifically for sixth form inspection judgements.

Common terminology used by inspectors

Achievement:	the progress and success of a pupil in their learning, development or training.
Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
Capacity to improve:	the proven ability of the school to continue improving. Inspectors base this judgement on what the school has accomplished so far and on the quality of its systems to maintain improvement.
Leadership and management:	the contribution of all the staff with responsibilities, not just the headteacher, to identifying priorities, directing and motivating staff and running the school.
Learning:	how well pupils acquire knowledge, develop their understanding, learn and practise skills and are developing their competence as learners.
Overall effectiveness:	<p>inspectors form a judgement on a school's overall effectiveness based on the findings from their inspection of the school. The following judgements, in particular, influence what the overall effectiveness judgement will be.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">■ The school's capacity for sustained improvement.■ Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils.■ The quality of teaching.■ The extent to which the curriculum meets pupil's needs, including where relevant, through partnerships.■ The effectiveness of care, guidance and support.
Progress:	the rate at which pupils are learning in lessons and over longer periods of time. It is often measured by comparing the pupils' attainment at the end of a key stage with their attainment when they started.

This letter is provided for the school, parents and carers to share with their children. It describes Ofsted's main findings from the inspection of their school.



7 December 2009

Dear Students

Inspection of Woodlands Secondary School, Luton LU3 3SP

Thank you for helping us to find out about your school. We enjoyed watching lessons and talking to some of you. You attend a happy and friendly school. These are some of the best things about your school:

- you make good progress in your work
- you behave very well in school
- your headteacher and senior teachers have very good ideas about ways to improve the school
- teaching is good and the staff work hard to make sessions interesting
- a very good partnership is in place between the school, your parents, carers and others
- staff care and support you very well and listen to you thoughtfully so that you feel really safe in school.

We have asked your school to look at how they can make things even better. The most important things they need to do are to make sure:

- discussion occurs more regularly about your personal targets and you understand more fully what skills and outcomes the teacher is looking for in each lesson
- senior leaders watch over your progress and attainment in more detail
- your personal targets explain clearly how you can decide if you have met them.

Continue to listen carefully to staff comments; come to school everyday and enjoy all the great things you are learning at Woodlands Secondary School.

Yours sincerely

Jackie Cousins

Lead inspector

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