

Woodlands Community College

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	116465
Local Authority	Southampton
Inspection number	338823
Inspection dates	11–12 November 2009
Reporting inspector	Alan Taylor-Bennett HMI

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

Type of school	Comprehensive
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	11–16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	772
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Susan Blatchford
Headteacher	Joanna Anslow
Date of previous school inspection	0 October 2006
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and three additional inspectors. The inspectors visited 34 lessons, and held meetings with governors, a local authority representative, staff and groups of pupils. They observed the school's work, and looked at the school's self-review, its development plan, analyses of the attainment and progress of its pupils, records of lesson observations, policies, staff training records and 79 parental questionnaires.

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

- the attainment and progress of all groups of pupils, and particularly any trends
- the attendance of pupils and the impact of measures being taken to improve it
- the effects on outcomes in key areas of new management systems put in place over 2008/09.

Information about the school

Woodlands Community College is a specialist science and engineering college. Its intake reflects its locality, and the school has a larger than average number of pupils who are eligible for free school meals. The proportion of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities is significantly higher than the national average. The college holds the Healthy Schools award (at enhanced level) and the Basic Skills Quality Mark. There is separate childcare provision on the site which is managed independently of the governing body of the school.

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?

3

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

3

Main findings

- Woodlands Community College is providing a satisfactory standard of education for its pupils.
- It is well led by the headteacher and her senior staff who demonstrate passionate commitment to obtaining good outcomes for all pupils. The school has the capacity to improve further.
- Attainment is low on entry and is still low by the time pupils leave, but it is improving rapidly at the moment.
- Progress is getting better because of the improvements made to teaching, the systems put in place to respond to pupils' needs in each year group and the successful mentoring of some pupils.
- Teaching is satisfactory and there is some good practice. The improvement in the quality of the teaching that is driving the better progress of pupils is still uneven across classrooms.
- Many teachers make good use of the pupil assessment information available when planning lessons but too few provide the individualised approaches and resources in classrooms necessary to secure the good progress of all.
- The care, guidance and support provided by the school are good. The school is highly responsive to individual needs and staff work closely with a range of outside agencies for the benefit of pupils.
- Behaviour around the site is lively but satisfactory. Behaviour in lessons is usually conducive to good learning. Pupils feel very safe in school and well looked after by staff.
- Pupils understand what it means to have a healthy lifestyle and many take part in the extra-curricular opportunities on offer before and after school.
- Many pupils enjoy taking part in the wide range of special projects and events, and make a good contribution to their school and to the wider community.
- Pupils develop good social skills over their time at the school and many take part in a lot of activities that broaden their cultural experiences significantly. They are responsive to aspects of lessons and assemblies designed to make them reflect and explore their feelings.
- Attendance is low because of a relatively large number of pupils who are persistently absent. The school has had some success in addressing this, and the number of persistent absentees is reducing, but it is still a key priority.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

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- Improve attainment so that it is broadly in line with national standards by July 2011 by:
 - applying the strengths seen in some good and outstanding teaching more consistently in all classrooms
 - make better use of the existing good quality assessment information to plan lessons and set learning outcomes for all pupils across all subjects
 - ensure that all pupils make good progress in lessons by setting tasks and employing resources appropriate to each individual's ability.
- Improve attendance to the national average by December 2011 by reducing the proportion of pupils who are persistent absentees, by working with parents and carers, pupils, and appropriate outside agencies to secure everyone's urgent and whole-hearted contribution to this priority.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils**3**

Pupils enter the school with levels of attainment that are below average and sometimes well below average. They leave with GCSE examination results which are significantly below those of their age group nationally. Recent changes to the curriculum, improvements in the quality of teaching and in the way that groups of pupils are now identified and intensively supported are improving standards across the school. This means that attainment is improving strongly in many subjects, and particularly in English and mathematics and some of the specialist subjects. However, some important targets in the specialist subjects are still not met. The progress that pupils are making is also getting better and this is reflected in the significant proportion of lessons observed in which the quality of pupils' learning and their levels of engagement were good. These developments are the result of a clear set of priorities established and strongly communicated by the headteacher and her senior staff which are applied and overseen rigorously. This ensures that these improvements are now a secure aspect of the work of the school. Pupils made a point of saying to inspectors that over the last year two years they had gained in confidence about how to improve their work, felt happier in school and were enjoying learning much more. Pupils are therefore now achieving satisfactorily. The progress of different groups of pupils, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities, is not significantly different to that of their peers. The school provides a safe and secure environment, both in lessons and around the school. Pupils are confident that any issues that arise, such as bullying, will be dealt with promptly and effectively by staff. Behaviour is satisfactory around the site; although pupils are boisterous, there is usually a happy atmosphere. Behaviour in lessons supports learning, although occasionally some pupils lose concentration and this slows progress. Pupils show respect for the school environment and it is a pleasant place in which to work.

Pupils show a good understanding of the importance of a healthy lifestyle and they participate well in a range of sporting activities. They make a good contribution to the work of the school through the highly effective school council, the prefect system and a

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range of 'buddy activities'. Their contributions are significant and wide ranging in the community. For example, Woodlands pupils constitute a quarter of the city's sports ambassadors and make significant contributions to the organisation and production of music for city events.

Attendance is low despite vigorous efforts by the school to reach the relatively large proportion of children who are persistently absent. The intervention of some outside agencies is valued and has helped the school to have the impact it has so far. This has included action through the courts in some cases. As a consequence, the number of persistent absentees has reduced significantly over the last year, which has improved the overall level of attendance. There remains a significant core of pupils for whom these efforts has been ineffective so far, and overall attendance is still low.

The school prepares pupils well for transitions in their lives. The liaison work with primary schools is particularly impressive. Pupils and their parents feel well informed about subject choices during their time at the school, and the full range of options for their future when they leave. This good advice and guidance, coupled with pupils' capacity to employ their basic skills adequately in a range of situations, means that the school is preparing them satisfactorily for further education and training and the workplace.

Pupils work with their peers well and many value the relationship of trust and respect they have developed with their teachers. The curriculum and assemblies provide a range of opportunities for pupils to develop their spiritual and cultural awareness and they do so satisfactorily.

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	3
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attainment ¹	4
The quality of pupils' learning and their progress	3
The quality of learning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress	3
The extent to which pupils feel safe	2
Pupils' behaviour	3
The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community	2

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

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The extent to which pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being Taking into account: Pupils' attendance ¹	3
	4
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2

How effective is the provision?

Staff have good subject knowledge and employ an appropriate range of strategies in lessons to secure the involvement of pupils in their learning. Support for individuals in lessons, and in specially arranged intervention opportunities, is good. In the best lessons, there is an appropriate level of challenge, a lively style and well chosen activities to help pupils to work enthusiastically towards carefully defined goals in a safe and secure environment. However, some poor behaviour by students can occasionally present a barrier to learning. Teaching usually takes into account the needs of students, for example in relation to their relatively weak literacy skills, but it is not always well matched to the range of different abilities within a class. Good use is made of information and communication technology (ICT) such as interactive whiteboards to enhance learning. Many lessons include opportunities for students to assess their own work and that of their peers against criteria, but feedback from teachers in books is not always as frequent as it should be.

The curriculum has been carefully designed to suit the specific needs of learners at the school. For example, the Year 7 'Journey-7' competency programme effectively develops pupils' learning and thinking skills. A wide range of thoughtfully and strategically planned intervention strategies are in place in each year group to raise levels of literacy and numeracy and other skills, from a low level on entry to the school. The nature of the provision for older pupils is already beginning to change in response to the effectiveness of the programmes delivered earlier. The school has been recognised by national agencies for its innovative work in this respect. The Key Stage 4 curriculum has been broadened to offer a range of vocational options and the offer is adapted each year to suit the needs and interests of that year group. The school has a wide range of effective partnerships with other local providers and has taken the lead in the city in delivering the engineering Diploma at levels 1 and 2. There is a wide range of extra-curricular opportunities as a part of the school's full service extended school programme, including many targeted at vulnerable groups and groups in the community in need of specific provision.

The care given to pupils is well organised, carefully targeted and effective because of the good systems in the school and good liaison work undertaken with a wide range of outside agencies who work in partnership with the school. This ensures that all students feel well looked after and that outcomes for pupils are at least satisfactory, with some that are good. Pupils are guided and supported at all stages of their school career and, wherever possible, their families are involved so that the values enforced and the messages sent are consistent between home and school. Students' safety and welfare

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are a high priority at the school and the support given to the significant proportion of vulnerable pupils is outstanding. One pupil made a point of making sure that inspectors knew the impact of this good support by saying, 'Staff here find time for me; they have really helped me to get myself sorted out.' Useful partnerships have been established to support pupils' aims and aspirations, including the extensive Aimhigher programme involving local universities. A group of pupils in Year 11 reinforced this by saying that the school's care for them translated into ambitious hopes for their future.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The quality of teaching	3
Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	3
The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships	2
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	2

How effective are leadership and management?

The headteacher and her senior staff are dedicated to providing the highest quality support and securing the best possible outcomes for pupils. The school has an accurate view of its strengths and its areas for improvement. The systems in place to improve outcomes are of good quality and they are applied rigorously, taking good regard of equality of opportunity. They are having a positive impact on many aspects of the school's provision and in several key outcomes for pupils. For example, the improvements in the quality of teaching are a result of rigorous monitoring and evaluation of all classroom practice. Regularly updated information about the attainment of groups of pupils and individuals is used to target specific interventions for groups and individuals, including the mentoring of some by senior staff, although it is not used consistently by all staff when planning lessons. A project with a group of girls who were in danger of becoming disaffected with school and learning led to them all moving into post-16 education and training. Systematic responses such as these are driving up attainment, improving the progress made by pupils, and securing better quality outcomes in other areas.

The success of these approaches indicates that the school has the capacity to make further improvement. Staff morale is high because they understand the vision of the headteacher and feel that their skills are being channelled to good effect. Governors and staff share a strong sense of commitment to address aspects of pupils' outcomes that are still relatively weak, such as attendance and attainment, despite their convincing upward trend. Policies and staff training to ensure the safeguarding of pupils are of good quality, and processes of risk assessment in all aspects of the school's work are thorough. There are responsive and effective systems in place to detect the need to take any urgent action to support individuals.

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The school understands the strengths and needs of the locality and undertakes regular audits of what it can do to contribute to its cohesion and community spirit. This analysis leads to actions, guided by the school's planning, and the school evaluates their impact. For example, the Kickz project has been particularly effective in working to create a safer community. There are currently well-developed links with communities in India and Uganda. The governing body supports the work of the school closely and effectively from a good understanding of its strategic priorities. It offers constructive challenge to the school and makes a good contribution to its planning and self-evaluation. It places a clear emphasis on the welfare and safeguarding of pupils. Value for money is satisfactory because finances are well managed, expenditure is prioritised against the needs highlighted in the development plan and outcomes are satisfactory.

The school has a wide range of ways to communicate with parents and carers and the overall response to this provision is positive. A small minority feel either disengaged from the work of the school, as reflected in the low response to the parental questionnaire, or express concerns about aspects of its work. The leadership of the school is committed to responding to this need to improve links and build bridges with some parents and carers.

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	3
The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers	3
The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being	3
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	3

Views of parents and carers

The number of questionnaires returned by parents was low. The very large majority of parents who expressed a view are happy with their child's experiences and said that their children enjoyed the school. Many made a particular point of praising the school for

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the way that it prepares their children for the future. Some expressed concern about bullying and the way that the school responds to this and other poor behaviour, but this was at odds with responses from pupils. A small minority of parents felt that the school did not help them to support their child's learning, although most felt that the school met their child's particular needs. Some comments indicated that parents feel that it is difficult to communicate with the school by telephone.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Woodlands Community College 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 79 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 772 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	21	27	47	60	7	9	3	4
The school keeps my child safe	26	33	39	49	9	11	2	3
The school informs me about my child's progress	14	18	49	62	11	14	5	6
My child is making enough progress at this school	16	20	48	61	8	10	5	6
The teaching is good at this school	24	30	42	53	9	11	2	3
The school helps me to support my child's learning	14	18	37	47	15	19	6	8
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	21	27	42	53	11	14	1	1
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)	22	28	41	52	4	5	4	5
The school meets my child's particular needs	19	24	45	57	8	10	2	3
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	16	20	36	46	15	19	6	8
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	16	20	40	51	10	13	7	9
The school is led and managed effectively	24	30	36	46	9	11	5	6
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	27	34	36	46	7	9	5	6

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.



13 November 2009

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Woodlands Community College, Southampton, SO18 5FW

You will remember that an inspection team visited your school recently. Thank you for the welcome you showed us, and for your willingness to play an active part in the inspection. This meant that we got to know your school well. We found that it is providing you with a satisfactory quality of education.

Your school is good at caring for you and offering you guidance and support. It is particularly good at helping those of you who need some extra help at various times. Many of you benefit from this at some point in your time at the school. The vast majority of you feel safe in school, and you make a good contribution to the school and to the wider community. The curriculum the school offers you is also good and we were impressed with the range of options at Key Stage 4, including the new engineering Diploma. The school provides lots of special support for groups who need help catching up, or who have the chance of reaching those all-important C or above grades and need extra help. All of this is improving your knowledge and understanding in key subjects, and helping you to make better progress overall.

The headteacher and her senior staff are leading the school well. They want to serve your needs as successfully as they possibly can. They know how to improve outcomes for you further and we agreed that two things are very important.

- The first is to improve the standard of your work, as shown in test and examination results. This will be done by bringing all of the teaching up to the standard of the best currently in the school, and making better use of assessments to ensure that you are all able to make good progress by doing the right kind of work, and in ways that suit you best.
- Second, some of you do not come to school. This means that you cannot benefit from all that the school can do for you and that you are damaging your chances of being successful and happy in the future. The school wants to reduce the number of you who are persistent absentees and will take whatever steps are necessary to do so, working closely with other agencies to achieve this.

I would like to wish you all every success and happiness for the future in your time at Woodlands, and beyond.

Yours sincerely

Alan Taylor-Bennett

Her Majesty's Inspector

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