

Woolgrove School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	117689
Local Authority	Hertfordshire
Inspection number	339049
Inspection dates	28–29 April 2010
Reporting inspector	Margaret Goodchild

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

Type of school	Special
School category	Community special
Age range of pupils	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	96
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr Brian Frederick
Headteacher	Mrs Bridget Walton
Date of previous school inspection	28 November 2006
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by two additional inspectors. Fourteen lessons or parts of lessons were observed and 10 teachers were seen; sessions led by teaching assistants were also sampled. Meetings were held with groups of pupils, governors and staff. Inspectors observed the school's work, and looked at records of pupils' progress, the school's self-evaluation and development planning, specialist programmes for pupils with complex needs, and materials to support partnership with parents. Inspectors analysed 47 parental questionnaires together with those completed by pupils and staff.

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

- whether the school's efforts to raise achievement in mathematics are having a distinct impact, particularly for girls
- the extent to which pupils and parents are engaged as active participants in school improvement
- how well the school has adapted its provision to meet the full range of pupils' difficulties, including those with complex needs.

Information about the school

This is a special school for primary-aged pupils with a statement of special educational needs for moderate learning difficulties. Over half the pupils also have autistic spectrum disorders and the majority have additional needs, including speech and language difficulties, specific learning difficulties, attention deficit hyperactivity disorders and/or physical difficulties. The school caters for an increasing range of pupils with complex needs and has a few with severe learning difficulties. The autism base provides places for eight pupils as a means of integrating them into the school. There are over twice as many boys as girls on roll. Woolgrove provides an outreach service and resource centre for over a hundred schools in the catchment area. It offers a full range of services as a member of an extended schools consortium. The school's work has been recognised in recent years by gaining Activemark Gold, Artsmark Gold, the Healthy Schools Award, the National Mentoring Award and quality marks for Basic Skills, ICT, and Inclusion.

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?

1

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

1

Main findings

Parents express a very high level of satisfaction with the school, describing it as 'amazing' and 'wonderful'. They say, 'The staff do a fantastic job in meeting the personal and academic needs of each individual' and, 'They include parents in the extended family that is Woolgrove.' The school has sustained and built on the outstanding quality found at the last inspection because the headteacher, senior leaders and governors are passionate about making the school as good as possible for the pupils. Senior leaders gather a wealth of assessment information and make exceptionally good use of data to evaluate the school's effectiveness and inform development planning. The school has fully resolved the one issue identified at the last inspection, so that provision for information and communication technology (ICT) is now a clear strength and it has been awarded the ICT Quality Mark for the second time. The excellent opportunities staff are given to develop their skills through training have enabled the school to respond very well to the increasing complexity of its intake and staff work constantly to match learning opportunities to pupils' learning needs. The school's track record and strong drive for improvement mean that it is exceptionally well placed to improve further.

Pupils' achievement and their enjoyment of learning are outstanding as a result of high quality teaching and a curriculum that is matched extremely well to their needs.

Outstanding care, guidance and support ensure that pupils are happy at school and relate extremely well with one another. The progress of all groups of pupils, including that of girls and boys, is exceptionally good. The achievement of girls who left in 2009 was outstanding in English, mathematics and science, but a few girls did marginally less well in mathematics than in other subjects. The school's detailed analysis identified the need to strengthen the teaching of shape, space and measure, and a number of initiatives have been introduced to promote girls' learning in mathematics. The newly introduced lunchtime mathematics club for girls has already increased their enthusiasm for the subject. Lessons observed during the inspection included some very good examples of the teaching of shape and space within other subjects. Mathematics lessons showed that teaching is consistently at least good and often outstanding but, on occasion, teachers do not engage girls as actively as boys in answering questions or match practical resources in the teaching of shape, space and measure precisely to the needs of different groups of pupils.

Links with other educational establishments support pupils' personal and social development extremely well. The outreach programme is very well received by local schools, providing a flexible service that is regularly reviewed and adapted to the needs of its clients. Woolgrove engages parents exceptionally well in school improvement. It provides them with comprehensive information, promotes their parenting skills through

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workshops and training events, and involves them closely in their children's learning. This makes parents and carers feel, as one put it, 'part of the team, helping to educate our child'.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Ensure that all girls consistently make the exceptional progress in mathematics that they do in other subjects by:
 - making sure that teachers fully engage girls in questioning during mathematics lessons
 - matching practical resources precisely to the needs of different groups of pupils, especially when teaching shape, space and measure
 - regularly monitoring the progress of girls in mathematics through focused lesson observation.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils**1**

The school's highly-detailed tracking data show that there has been an increase in pupils' achievement since the last inspection despite the greater complexity of the special educational needs and/or disabilities of the school's intake. Pupils meet a very high proportion of the challenging targets set for them. The achievement of pupils whose circumstances make them vulnerable and those with the most complex needs is as good as that of their peers, and pupils with autistic spectrum disorders do particularly well. In lessons, pupils' learning and progress are consistently at least good and often outstanding. Since the last inspection, the school has focused on increasing pupils' skills so that they are better able to collaborate with staff. Pupils contribute to making decisions about their learning and, as a result, they are enthusiastic and show a high level of interest in the tasks set for them. For instance, in a lesson where the youngest children were developing recording skills, their excitement and eager communication was due in no small part to the opportunity to choose between working on paper or electronically and between producing a treasure map or a greetings card. Since the last inspection, improved facilities and planning for ICT have led to an increase in pupils' achievement; they now do very well in the subject. Throughout the school, pupils do exceptionally well in science in response to inspirational teaching, and they produce highly attractive artwork through working with visiting artists, for instance, during arts week on the theme of Africa.

Pupils' say that they feel 'really safe' in school and they readily adopt healthy lifestyles. The school's commitment to promoting pupils' health is reflected in gaining Activemark Gold as well as the Healthy Schools Award. Pupils take part with enthusiasm in a daily physical workout and thoroughly enjoy sporting activities, including weekly swimming and riding. Pupils' outstanding behaviour contributes extremely well to their learning as they remain absorbed, focused and interested in lessons. The rate of attendance remains high compared with that of similar schools nationally. They are thoughtful

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towards one another, care deeply about others in the community, and understand and respect diversity. Pupils' contribution to the school community is outstanding. They have been central to discussions about the marking policy, homework policy, the development of the sensory garden, supporting local charities, and choosing theme days. Pupils in Year 6 complete work shadowing and the school has recently gained the Basic Skills Quality Mark, reflecting pupils' outstanding progress and preparation for the next stage of their education.

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	1
Taking into account: Pupils' attainment ¹	*
The quality of pupils' learning and their progress	1
The quality of learning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress	1
The extent to which pupils feel safe	1
Pupils' behaviour	1
The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles	1
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	1
Taking into account: Pupils' attendance ¹	1
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1

How effective is the provision?

Teachers use their subject knowledge very effectively to plan lessons that provide plenty of variety and probe pupils' understanding through detailed questioning. For instance, in an outstanding lesson in design and technology, the teacher led pupils to link their knowledge of energy from science with the task of powering the model vehicles they

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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were making. His high expectations and lively demonstration captured their imagination so that they could barely wait to put the theory into practice for themselves. Lesson objectives are clear and teachers reinforce these visually throughout the lesson so that pupils understand what they are meant to learn and how they can improve their work. Regular marking by all staff, with the pupil present and involved, aids pupils' understanding of their learning. Where lessons are at times good rather than outstanding, teaching is very competent but less exciting than in the best lessons.

The school has been successful in gaining a large number of national awards which reflect the variety and excitement of its curriculum. The school uses assessment information exceptionally well to match the curriculum to the needs of different groups of pupils. For instance, excellent individualised sessions for pupils with speech and language difficulties, where they exercise different parts of their mouth and face, have had an extremely positive effect on their ability to speak. In the autism base and throughout the school, staff use a number of practical strategies to support the learning of pupils with autistic spectrum disorders, including pictures to assist communication and stories that promote positive behaviour and social interaction. These ensure that the many pupils with autism feel secure and able to concentrate. The school places very good emphasis on developing pupils' skills, knowledge and understanding in English, mathematics, science and ICT, and learning is enriched extremely well by a wide range of additional activities. These include clubs, themed days, special events such as arts week, musical and dramatic performances, and regular use of the school's conservation area.

Parents are delighted with the way the school cares for their children and say that the staff 'go beyond the call of duty'. Excellent therapeutic provision includes art, music and drama therapy, and counselling. The family link worker provides valuable support for pupils whose circumstances make them vulnerable. As part the extended schools initiative, Woolgrove hosts family learning and a Saturday morning club for pupils with autistic spectrum disorders and their parents: a service that is much appreciated by parents.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

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

How effective are leadership and management?

A clear shared vision and accurate self-evaluation inform the continuous drive for school improvement. Outstanding leadership of teaching and learning is based on very

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thorough performance management of all the staff and extensive training, including involvement in a great deal of action research. The value placed on developing the staff's potential contributes to their high morale and the very stable staffing. Senior leaders gather a wealth of evidence to support self-evaluation and subject leaders identify strengths and development priorities in their areas. The governing body provides exceptionally good support and challenge to the school. Regular visits and involvement in working parties ensure that governors have a very good understanding of the school's work. They place outstanding emphasis on safeguarding. Risk assessment is extremely thorough and excellent strategies for managing challenging behaviour ensure that pupils learn in a very safe and calm environment.

The school has undertaken a thorough audit of its contribution to community cohesion and has a clear understanding of the religious, ethnic and socio-economic characteristics of its community. The school itself is a harmonious community where everyone is valued and differences are celebrated. There are very close links with the local community, and the school has established links with a school in Florida as well as raising funds for a number of international charities. The school promotes equality of opportunity exceptionally well, using data to very good effect to check on the progress of different groups of pupils and fine-tuning its provision at the first hint of any variation in achievement. Senior leaders, rightly, identified that a small number of girls had done less well in mathematics than in English and science, and quickly put in place a number of strategies to remedy this. The overall achievement of girls in mathematics was still outstanding, nevertheless, and this slight variation represents only a minimal difference in performance.

These are the grades for leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	1
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	1
The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met	1
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	1
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	1
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	1
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	1

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Early Years Foundation Stage

Children make exceptionally good progress in the Early Years Foundation Stage, particularly in their personal, social and emotional development, in communication, language and literacy and in numeracy. Teaching is outstanding: staff are very skilled in engaging children, getting them to express their ideas, and providing them with opportunities to make choices and decisions. There is a good balance of adult-led and child-initiated activities, and activities are matched very well to the needs of individual children. Children in the autism base benefit from a curriculum that is matched precisely to their personal and learning needs. Regular observation informs highly detailed individual targets and children's progress is tracked carefully. The staff work very closely with parents and consult them extensively on all aspects of provision, as well as involving them as active participants in their children's learning. The Early Years Foundation Stage is led exceptionally well; as in the rest of the school, improvement is continuous and self-evaluation is very thorough.

These are the grades for the Early Years Foundation Stage

Overall effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage	1
Taking into account:	
Outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage	1
The quality of provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage	1
The effectiveness of leadership and management of the Early Years Foundation Stage	1

Views of parents and carers

Parents and carers express a very high level of satisfaction with the school's work. In particular, they appreciate that their children are kept safe, that teaching is at least good, that their children's individual needs are met and that the school is led and managed effectively. Inspectors agree with parents' positive views.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Woolgrove 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 47 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 96 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	31	66	14	30	1	2	1	2
The school keeps my child safe	40	85	6	13	0	0	1	2
The school informs me about my child's progress	39	83	6	13	0	0	1	2
My child is making enough progress at this school	34	72	9	19	1	2	2	4
The teaching is good at this school	42	89	4	9	1	2	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	38	81	8	17	0	0	1	2
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	34	72	12	26	0	0	1	2
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)	32	68	13	28	0	0	1	2
The school meets my child's particular needs	40	85	3	6	2	4	1	2
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	36	77	10	21	0	0	1	2
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	36	77	9	19	1	2	1	2
The school is led and managed effectively	41	87	5	11	0	0	1	2
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	44	94	1	2	1	2	1	2

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

Type of school	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Nursery schools	51	45	0	4
Primary schools	6	41	42	10
Secondary schools	8	34	44	14
Sixth forms	10	37	50	3
Special schools	32	38	25	5
Pupil referral units	12	43	31	14
All schools	9	40	40	10

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 is for the period 1 September to 31 December 2009 and is the most recently published data available (see www.ofsted.gov.uk). Please note that the sample of schools inspected during the autumn term 2009 was not representative of all schools nationally, as weaker schools are inspected more frequently than good or outstanding schools.

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.



30 April 2010

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Woolgrove School, Letchworth Garden City, SG6 2PT

Thank you for making us welcome when we came to inspect your school. We enjoyed visiting your lessons, seeing all the work that you have been doing and finding out what you think about the school. You told us that you enjoy school very much and many of your parents wrote to say how pleased they are with the school. We agree with them that you go to an outstanding school.

You make really good progress because your teachers plan lessons very carefully and give you plenty of opportunities to answer questions and make choices. We could see how enthusiastic you are about the many activities: going to clubs at lunchtime and after school, and taking part in the pantomime. You produced some lovely work when you learnt about Africa during arts week, and the dragon on display in the hall is fantastic. The staff look after you really well and care about you very much. We were pleased to see how well you behave and get on together.

Your headteacher, senior teachers and governors are always working to make the school even better for you. They found that girls do not always do as well in mathematics as they do in English and science, and they have already done several things to put this right. We want to help them with this and so we have asked them to:

- make sure that girls answer as many questions as boys in mathematics lessons
- make sure teachers choose practical equipment, like number cubes and shapes, very carefully to help you understand new ideas
- look carefully at how much progress girls are making in mathematics lessons.

You can all help the school to become even better by always trying your best, and you girls can help by putting up your hands when you know the answer in mathematics or asking if you are not sure.

Yours sincerely

Margaret Goodchild

Lead inspector

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