

Woodlands School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	123630
Local Authority	Shropshire
Inspection number	340380
Inspection dates	5–6 July 2010
Reporting inspector	Alan Dobbins

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	11–16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	24
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Edwin Thorpe
Headteacher	Robin Wilson
Date of previous school inspection	8 March 2007
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by two additional inspectors. The inspectors saw eight lessons in whole or in part, observed six of the school's teachers, held meetings with members of the governing body, staff and groups of pupils, and spoke with the local authority's adviser to the school and the School Improvement Partner. They looked at data the school has on pupils' progress, and scrutinised the three questionnaires returned from parents and carers.

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

- how well pupils are being prepared for the next stage of their education and life thereafter
- whether pupils are attending well enough to gain benefit from what the school offers
- how effectively teaching meets the learning needs of all groups of pupils, especially the small minority of girls
- the effectiveness of senior leaders in driving school improvement.

Information about the school

Woodlands School is a small school designated for pupils with behaviour and social and emotional difficulties. All pupils have a statement of special educational needs. They attend from over all of the county of Shropshire, and a small number come from adjacent local authorities. Increasingly, pupils are entering the school with more complex special educational needs and/or disabilities that include attention deficit disorder and autistic spectrum disorder. Almost all the pupils are from a White British heritage with a very small minority being girls. Since the last inspection there has been a very high level of staff absence, mainly through extended illness. The school has gained Healthy School status.

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 is a satisfactory school. Since the last inspection the good work of the senior leaders has limited the impact of significant extended absences of many members of staff on teaching and learning and the day-to-day running of the school. They have maintained a safe place in which pupils make satisfactory progress in their academic learning and good progress as young people who are dealing with their difficulties. Staffing levels are now more stable, and many pupils say they appreciate the school because they are 'understood here' and because they are learning 'more than in their other schools'.

Comparison with national data for equivalent schools shows that over their time at school, pupils make satisfactory progress in English, mathematics and science and good progress in physical education and in the food and resistant materials aspects of design technology. Each pupil who left last year was accepted by a college of further education or a training provider to follow vocational courses preparing them for the world of work. In some lessons teaching is good and pupils make good progress against their targets for learning, but in most lessons planning is not securely based on assessment information that helps teachers recognise what pupils know and can do. As a result, pupils sometimes find tasks either too easy or too hard, and so become frustrated and on occasion behave inappropriately. In such cases, progress is limited because teachers and their assistants have to spend time in returning them to their learning.

Most pupils attend regularly enough to gain benefit from what the school offers, and grow up as young people who expect to be successful at the next stage of their education. However, many join with a history of poor attendance in their previous schools. For some, especially those in the southern most parts of the county, this is compounded by having to travel for more than one hour to the school. The school and the education welfare service are rigorous in following up absence and have had success in returning a small number of persistent non-attenders to regular attendance, and they say the school is good for them. Records show that as they move through the school pupils gain greater control of their behaviour and, in lessons, spend more time at their learning. They develop good relationships with staff, and show increasing respect to staff and to each other. However, a minority are still not attending well enough.

Pupils' understanding of right and wrong is secure, although they do not always make the right choices, especially when these have to do with staying safe. The school is usually a calm and well-ordered place in which staff and pupils purposefully go about their business. However, when the difficulties pupils are dealing with cause them to be troubled and bothered, behaviour can quickly degenerate. Staff respond well, and the good relationships they have with the pupils contribute to them calming pupils, even

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when this takes some time.

The school's capacity for sustained further improvement is satisfactory. Senior leaders, and the governors, know the school's strengths and weaknesses well through their effective procedures for self-evaluation. They are acutely aware that plans for improving the school have been compromised by having to manage the exceptional level of staff absence. Nevertheless, since the last inspection there have been positive developments. The curriculum is changing well to meet the increasingly challenging needs of pupils, the links with parents and carers have much improved and the refined procedures for improving behaviour are having a positive impact. The school is aware that its current tracking system is not sophisticated enough to help teachers in planning lessons that are always right for pupils, to clearly identify the progress they make against their targets, or to show how well they are doing against those in other equivalent schools.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Work rigorously and creatively with the local authority and parents and carers to increase the attendance of pupils who are regularly absent.
- Make better use of assessment information for:
 - planning lessons activities that are relevant to each pupil because they match well with their learning needs
 - judging pupils' progress against their targets for learning
 - judging the quality of progress against that of other similar schools.
- About 40% of the schools whose overall effectiveness is judged satisfactory may
 - receive a monitoring visit by an Ofsted inspector before their next section 5
 - inspection.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

3

Over each of the last two years, pupils have joined the school with their levels of learning well below those expected for their age. On average, their reading ages are three or more years lower than those expected for their age. In most lessons, all pupils make satisfactory progress against their targets for learning. This includes the small number of girls and those who have greatest difficulties in dealing with their emotions and their behaviour. This is because class sizes are small and good support is readily available from the competent force of teaching assistants. In the lessons in which pupils are active in their learning, for example in those in food studies, they work hard and show positive attitudes to their work and behave well. The good relationships they have with their teachers and teaching assistants help make these lessons purposeful, friendly and fun events that are enjoyed by pupils and staff alike. In too many lessons, planning does not match well enough with pupils' learning and additional needs. As a consequence, the lesson tasks are not always right for them and too often teachers and their assistants have to spend time in returning pupils to their learning. Those pupils who attend poorly make too little progress in their learning and in dealing with their difficulties.

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There is no school council, but the small number of pupils means that they can easily give staff their opinions and thoughts on matters to do with the school. These have resulted in the setting up of the trim trail and, most recently, the purchase of bicycles for use around the extensive grounds. Generally pupils work well with staff, for example in tending the school's garden and in collecting fruit, vegetables and herbs that kitchen staff use in preparing their lunch and in their food study lessons. Gaining Healthy School status has helped make visible the importance of maintaining a healthy lifestyle. This is reinforced by the healthy foods they enjoy at lunch time, and at other times throughout the day. Their awareness of wider national and international communities is gained through the curriculum and through the charities pupils choose to support. The way that pupils tend the grave of a former pupil of the school, who died when it was a school for Jewish refugees during the last war, is much appreciated by those of the local parish. The annual residential visit for the older pupils is a valuable opportunity for them to increase their self-esteem by gaining in self-confidence and self-assurance, ready for the next stage of their lives.

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	*
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	3
Pupils' behaviour	3
The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community	3
The extent to which pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	3
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attendance ¹	3

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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The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	3
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How effective is the provision?

Teachers and their assistants are acutely aware that an increasing number of pupils have more complex issues to deal with than in the past. They are working well in developing their skills and understanding of the specialist teaching approaches that have been successful in meeting the needs of pupils with, for example, autism and dyslexia. The recent use of specialist texts to help in teaching reading is a good example.

Increasingly, the curriculum is emphasising the development of literacy and numeracy as a first step to pupils gaining full access to their work in other subjects and to helping them gain the skills of independent learning. Providing vocational courses for the older pupils, for example in motor mechanics and building construction and, shortly, in horticulture, rather than more academic GCSEs, results in a better match to their interests and capabilities.

Pupils benefit from good advice and support. The procedures for recognising how well they have worked and behaved in each lesson work very well. They are liked by pupils because they show the gains they are making in behaving better and guide them to their next challenge. The links with parents and carers have improved as a result of more effective communication from the school. Often through home visits, parents and carers gain good support and advice from staff in dealing with their children at home and with the difficulties they have in their own lives. In some cases, annual reviews are held at the family home to ensure their presence. They receive a weekly report through the home-school book on how well their children have done, and this includes the number of points they have gained against their three targets. The organisation for providing multi-agency links has been changed recently to have a more positive effect on all aspects of pupils' development through the provision of additional specialist help and the recognition of possible future pathways. Transition arrangements to colleges of further education and to training providers that are local to pupils' homes work well.

The school and the education welfare service have explored many avenues to improve the attendance of pupils who are persistently absent, and the improving links with parents are designed to support the school's further efforts.

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	3
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	2

How effective are leadership and management?

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The success of senior leaders in minimising the impact of a turbulent period in the school's history means that more effort can now be given to realising the vision the leaders hold of a school, in which pupils enjoy their learning and where they gain the attributes and confidence for success at the next stage of their education and later life. The procedures for self-evaluation are good and the leaders have a clear awareness of what is required to make the school a better place. The governors function well in their role. They have a clear understanding of the difficulties faced by the school since the last inspection, but have maintained high expectations of school performance and are well placed to support leaders in moving the school forward.

Safeguarding procedures are thorough and the school ensures that it adopts good practice. Due regard has been paid to community cohesion. Many parents and carers have little to do with the school, sometimes because they live so far away, but the work of senior leaders in encouraging parents and carers to partner the school in its work is showing results. More parents and carers than at any other time in the past have committed to attend the summer barbeque and the end-of-year award ceremony, where they will meet their children's teachers and gain knowledge of what their children have achieved over the year. The partnerships with the local college of further education and a small number of training providers are used well in extending pupils' learning experiences beyond those available at the school.

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	3
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	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	3
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	3
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	3

Views of parents and carers

Very few parents and carers responded to the questionnaire, and so the statistical

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outcomes of the table on the next page should be treated with caution. Inspectors' judgements were in line with the positive views expressed. The individual concerns were investigated, but they were not corroborated by inspection evidence. Nonetheless, the school is aware of the current limitations in terms of its links with parents and carers, and is working hard to improve them.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Woodlands 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 three completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 24 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	0	0	2	67	0	0	1	33
The school keeps my child safe	1	33	1	33	1	33	0	0
The school informs me about my child's progress	2	67	0	0	0	0	1	33
My child is making enough progress at this school	2	67	0	0	0	0	1	33
The teaching is good at this school	2	67	0	0	1	33	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	2	67	0	0	1	33	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	1	33	1	33	0	0	1	33
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)	1	33	0	0	1	33	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	2	67	0	0	0	0	1	33
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	2	67	0	0	0	0	1	33
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	2	67	0	0	0	0	1	33
The school is led and managed effectively	2	67	0	0	1	33	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	2	67	0	0	0	0	1	33

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.



7 July 2010

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Woodlands School, Shrewsbury, SY4 5PJ

It was lovely for my colleague and me to meet and spend time with you when we visited your school. Thank you for making us welcome. We found your school to be a satisfactory school, which means that it does some things well but could do some other things better. These are some of the things we especially liked:

- the good advice guidance and support you gain from the staff
- the good way you work in the best of lessons
- the good relationships you have with your teachers and teaching assistants and the respect you show them most of the time
- the way staff are helping you improve your behaviour and to take greater control of your emotions
- the way in which your headteacher and the other senior leaders are changing some things about the school to provide you with what you need in your learning and in growing up.

There are a few things we would like to be done better. We would like all of you to attend regularly, so that everyone gains as much from being at the school as they possibly can. We would like the adults in charge of the school to improve their assessment system to make it easier for teachers to recognise what you know and can do, so they can plan lessons that are always right for you. This improved system should also help in judging how well you are doing against your targets for learning, and give senior leaders information on how well you are doing in comparison with other pupils in equivalent schools. We believe that these changes will help you to reach higher standards and make the school a better place in which to learn. Of course, you can help too - by always behaving as well as you can so that you limit the effect of poor behaviour on your progress in learning.

Yours sincerely

Alan Dobbins

Lead inspector

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