

Woodlands School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	133316
Local Authority	Harrow
Inspection number	341374
Inspection dates	9–10 December 2009
Reporting inspector	Jeffery Plumb

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	3–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	83
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Annemarie Taylor-Kent
Headteacher	John Feltham
Date of previous school inspection	0 June 2007
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by two additional inspectors. The inspectors visited 14 lessons, and held meetings with the chair of the governing body, pupils, parents, staff focus groups and members of the senior leadership team. They observed the school's work, and looked at a wide range of evidence, including data on pupils' progress, feeding and mobility plans, personalised learning programmes, intimate care plans, curriculum planning, safeguarding policies, risk assessments, the school's improvement plan, two case studies of vulnerable pupils and 29 parent questionnaires. In addition, they spent time looking at the transport arrangements at the end of the day.

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

- the progress of different special education and/or disability groups provided for by the school
- how teachers use assessment to inform their lesson planning to raise pupil achievement
- the school's strategy and planning to promote community cohesion.

Information about the school

Woodlands School provides for pupils with severe learning difficulties, profound and multiple learning difficulties and with an autistic spectrum disorder. There are 18 children in the Early Years Foundation Stage. All pupils have a statement of special educational needs, and there are more boys than girls. Most pupils come from minority ethnic groups and over half are from families where English is not the home language. All pupils, though, have complex communication difficulties associated with their special educational needs and/or disabilities. The proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals is above the national average. The school is co-located with a mainstream primary school. It is part of a cluster of schools which work together towards meeting the Extended Schools and Every Child Matters agenda.

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

Woodlands School provides an outstanding quality of education. Each pupil is viewed not as a person with a disability, but as a person with a valuable difference who is able to learn and succeed. Parents, a wide range of support agencies and a totally dedicated education staff work in an outstandingly effective partnership to remove barriers to learning for pupils related to their special educational needs and/or disabilities and equip them to become confident and independent learners. Innovative, relevant and personalised learning programmes for each pupil lie at the heart of what this successful school achieves for its pupils. Parents describe these programmes as 'fantastic', because they support them in continuing the excellent work carried out in school within the home and so they feel valued in supporting their children to develop vitally important life skills. Children in the Early Years Foundation Stage have extremely complex needs, but make outstanding progress because of the high quality educational provision and care they receive. Specialist programmes support pupils in becoming more independent in their movement and in their feeding. During the inspection, pupils were observed propelling their wheelchairs around the building with a glow in their eyes and a smile on their faces. Others, with pride, mastered climbing stairs with very little assistance. Those capable, with outstanding positioning and supported by modified spoons and forks designed to enable them to grip them more easily, make rapid gains in feeding independently. Therapists and education staff enable pupils to adopt safe practices in respect of movement and feeding which make an outstanding contribution to their health.

Much teaching sparkles and significantly improves pupils' communication skills. For example, in a class for children with autism, outstanding planning resulted in children moving away from the water tray where they were learning about capacity and independently removing a card from the wall with a picture of a swimming pool. This was a breakthrough as these children made a connection between the water they were playing with and a specialist room with a pool. In a class with pupils with profound and multiple learning difficulties in response to the question, 'Shall we sing the song loudly or softly?', one pupil reached out with his hand to touch a drum and others pointed with their eyes at a drum rather than the quieter musical instruments in the room. Although much teaching is outstanding, a few teachers do not make consistently sharp use of the assessments of pupils' needs to plan appropriate work to develop the next small steps in their learning. On these rare occasions, pupils are insufficiently challenged, as the pace of learning for them drops and this impedes the progress they make. Rigorous monitoring of teaching and learning recognises that this mainly occurs where teachers are new to the profession and/or the school. A dynamic programme of professional

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development based on their identified needs is in place, but it is too early to fully evaluate its impact.

Analysis of the school's performance in every aspect of its work is detailed, thorough and evidence based. This is a deeply reflective school and the headteacher, who leads passionately, ensures that the views of children, parents, governors and all staff feed the actions for improvement. Decisive actions following robust self-evaluation result in very significant improvements. For example, recent modifications to the English curriculum have resulted in significantly improving the quality of teaching and raised pupils' achievement in communication. Given the success of actions to raise pupil achievement in all areas of their lives since the last inspection, the capacity for sustained improvement is outstanding, as is the value for money provided by the school.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- All groups of pupils, except for those in regression because of their severe medical needs, make good progress in their learning. From very low starting points, the vast majority of pupils make good progress in English, mathematics and information and communication technology. Consequently, all groups of pupils make rapid gains in confidence and self-esteem as they learn to communicate their needs with increased independence. Pupils with autism become increasingly ready to learn. As they begin to communicate, they become less anxious and their behaviour improves significantly. Achievements in mathematics vary according to the type of needs pupils have. For example, pupils with severe learning difficulties count the number of bounces they make on the trampoline fairly accurately; those with profound and multiple learning difficulties experience the number of bounces they make. All experience handling money in a shop and those capable of doing so gain an understanding of how it is used. They use big switches to answer questions and buttons to elicit a response from computer programs. Pupils, when ready, attend classes in mainstream primary schools to enhance their letter sounds and develop important early reading skills.
- Overwhelmingly, pupils enjoy school and have a positive attitude to learning, as evidenced by their good attendance. Behaviour is outstanding. This is a credit to the implementation of the school's behaviour management strategies, as provision is made for some pupils with very challenging behaviours associated with their autism. Through carrying out jobs around the school, pupils make a very positive contribution to the community. Pupils, by their smiling faces, indicate that they feel safe with their carers and the focus group of pupils who met with the inspection team, using a wide range of communication techniques, clearly stated that they feel safe at school. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding. Their experiences of cultural diversity within a 'melting-pot environment' are abundantly rich. Racial harmony is outstanding and Hindu pupils join with mainstream pupils as they worship with them in their mandir in a local Hindu school.

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Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

1

Most teaching is lively and accelerates pupils' development and learning. In the vast majority of lessons, teachers and teaching assistants work together effectively to engage the interest of all pupils in the class and so ensure they succeed in their learning. For example, in an outstanding 'good morning session' at the start of the day for pupils with profound and multiple learning difficulties, the staff team ensured that every pupil was stimulated and fully engaged with learning. Pupils began to anticipate what was going to happen next. Most teachers use assessments on the pupils in their classes to plan work which challenges them. However, this is not consistent across all classes. Behaviour is very skilfully managed. Teachers are adept at using dynamic starter activities at the beginning of lessons to grasp pupils' full attention and so get them ready to learn.

Flexibly planned, personalised and tailor-made curriculum programmes meet the needs of pupils exceptionally well. For example, because of innovative and specialist curriculum programmes, some children completely dependent on adult support for mobility on entry to the school now navigate their wheelchairs, steering them accurately. Others, eating only small amounts of puréed food on entry, now go confidently to the hatch in the dining room and ask for what they want to eat. Through the curriculum every pupil is given the opportunity to realise her or his full potential. Visits to the shops support pupils with autism in becoming less anxious about meeting new people. Pupils with severe learning difficulties match what is on their shopping list with what is on the shelves in the supermarket. They communicate using gestures, signs and their voices with the cashier as they hand over money and wait for their change. Pupils with profound and multiple learning difficulties are fully included in such experiences, pointing with their eyes to making choices about what they want to buy. Programmes implemented to accelerate the development of a particular group of pupils are often modified to benefit all pupils. For example, a trampoline programme to promote independent movement for pupils with profound and multiple learning difficulties has been adapted to support the mathematical development of pupils with severe learning difficulties.

Very effective communication between health professionals, social services and educational staff ensure that the care needs of pupils are exceptionally well met. An interesting programme of workshops for parents helps families to support their children's development in the home environment. Parents and families are trained and equipped to manage their children's behavioural needs and to accelerate the development of their communication and independent mobility skills. A diverse range of languages is spoken by a staff team who come from the four corners of the world, and this is extremely useful in supporting minority ethnic families, including families from Eastern Europe. Outstanding intimate care plans ensure that pupils' toileting needs are met with absolute dignity and respect. Teachers and assistants are trained in handling techniques so that pupils are kept safe, for example when lifted in and out of the hydrotherapy pool. Outstanding arrangements are in place to help children settle in the

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Early Years Foundation Stage and to support pupils when they move on to secondary school.

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	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	2
Taking into account: Pupils' attendance ¹	2
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1

How effective is the provision?

The headteacher and other members of the senior leadership team, supported by a dedicated and hard-working staff team, promote a clear and shared vision which focuses on ceaselessly striving to remove obstacles to learning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities. Inclusion in community activity and with peers in mainstream schools is a strong feature of the school's provision. Equality of opportunity for all pupils is a core value of this school. The staff team has successfully created a courageous and confident learning community where pupils are encouraged to take safe risks and by so doing develop skills to equip them to be independent, often exceeding their independence targets. Senior and middle managers are clear about their roles and

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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responsibilities, and work collaboratively to enhance pupils' learning. Very effective management systems and procedures are in place to ensure pupils are secure and safe. At the time of the inspection, child protection procedures met government regulations. Risk assessments, including of pupils' medical and behavioural needs, are detailed and thorough.

Partnerships with local businesses are very effective. Local companies fund projects which very significantly enhance pupils' learning. Wheelchair and paediatric clinics are held in school to support families and help maintain good attendance. Outreach work with parents is innovative and focused on raising pupils' achievement. Provision for community cohesion is well planned. A thorough audit has been completed and a very good action plan has been drawn up, but the global dimension has yet to be implemented. Governance is outstanding. Governors ask challenging questions. Recent analysis by governors of the performance data on children in the Early Years Foundation Stage led the governing body to ask questions about why children's progress in physical development did not appear to be as good as in their other areas of learning. This has resulted in a review of the planning for this area of children's learning and is already beginning to impact on raising achievement.

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	1
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	1

How effective are leadership and management?

Children enter the Early Years Foundation Stage with extremely complex special educational needs and/or disabilities and associated challenging behaviours. The curriculum they experience is exceptionally well planned and the teaching they receive is outstanding. Consequently, from an extremely low starting point children make outstanding progress, particularly in their development of communication and personal and social development skills. The outdoor environment, laid out to promote all of the areas of learning for children of this age, is richly resourced. It raises children's curiosity and promotes their physical development exceptionally well.

The dedicated staff team regularly and frequently assess the children and use the assessments to re-align their planning to accelerate the children's learning. Adult-initiated activities are structured well and significantly enhance learning. Adults allow the children to run with their interests and very good learning results from such an approach. Children are always praised when they go off at a tangent from an adult-led activity for the learning which occurs.

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Leadership and management are outstanding. Partnerships with parents and external agencies are excellent. Parents are fully involved in setting key targets for their children's development. The staff team reflect constantly on their practice and regularly manage change, which benefits the children. It is a dynamic, lively environment where children are very happy and secure, but where expectations of what they can achieve are very high.

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	2
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	1

Early Years Foundation Stage

Returns of the Ofsted questionnaire indicate that parents are overwhelmingly delighted with what the school achieves for their children. Their views are exemplified by the comments, 'This is a fantastic school', and 'The teachers and staff do everything they can to help our children.' Inspectors agree with parents' views and evidence supports that they have every reason to be proud of what their children achieve in this outstanding school. Inspectors discovered that the school works very closely with parents and ceaselessly strives to improve this aspect of its work.

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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

Returns of the Ofsted questionnaire indicate that parents are overwhelmingly delighted with what the school achieves for their children. Their views are exemplified by the comments, 'This is a fantastic school', and 'The teachers and staff do everything they can to help our children.' Inspectors agree with parents' views and evidence supports that they have every reason to be proud of what their children achieve in this outstanding school. Inspectors discovered that the school works very closely with parents and ceaselessly strives to improve this aspect of its work.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Woodlands First & Middle 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 29 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 83 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	23	79	6	21	0	0	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	21	72	8	28	0	0	0	0
The school informs me about my child's progress	19	66	10	34	0	0	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	14	48	14	48	1	3	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	19	66	10	34	0	0	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	17	59	11	38	1	3	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	13	45	15	52	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)	14	48	11	38	0	0	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	20	69	8	28	1	3	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	15	52	10	34	0	0	0	0
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	17	59	11	38	0	0	0	0
The school is led and managed effectively	21	72	7	24	0	0	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	21	72	8	28	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.



11 December 2009

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Woodlands School, Edgware, Middlesex HA8 6JP

We so enjoyed our recent visit to your school. We think your school is a very caring and happy place and that you are given so many lovely opportunities to learn. Thanks to all of you.

Here are the main points we found:

- you are given so many interesting and exciting things to do
- you are helped using pictures, signs and switches to ask for things and to make choices about what you want to do
- you are helped to move by yourselves
- you enjoy coming to school and your behaviour is excellent
- adults run your school outstandingly well and ensure that you are kept safe and that your medical needs are fully met
- the school helps your parents to support your needs and your parents like that a lot
- you are helped to shop and to keep yourselves safe
- your lessons challenge you and you do really well.

To help your lovely and caring school, which is outstanding, to become that little bit better, I have asked your teachers to make sure that you are always given challenging work in lessons, based on what they know you need to learn.

You made me feel so welcome and comfortable and I will remember the gorgeous smiles on your faces every time you tried something new.

Yours sincerely

Jeffery Plumb

Lead Inspector

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