

Woodside School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	101485
Local Authority	Bexley
Inspection number	307706
Inspection dates	19–20 November 2008
Reporting inspector	Greg Sorrell

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

The registered childcare, managed by the governing body, was inspected under section 49 of the Childcare Act 2006.

Type of school	Special
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	4–16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School (total)	220
Government funded early education provision for children aged 3 to the end of the EYFS	0
Childcare provision for children aged 0 to 3 years	0
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr Alan Buhl
Headteacher	Ms Linda Crooks
Date of previous school inspection	9 May 2005
Date of previous funded early education inspection	Not previously inspected
Date of previous childcare inspection	Not previously inspected
School address	Halt Robin Road Belvedere DA17 6DW
Telephone number	01322 433494
Fax number	01322 433080

Age group	4–16
Inspection dates	19–20 November 2008
Inspection number	307706

© Crown copyright 2008

Website: www.ofsted.gov.uk

This document may be reproduced in whole or in part for non-commercial educational purposes, provided that the information quoted is reproduced without adaptation and the source and date of publication are stated.

Further copies of this report are obtainable from the school. Under the Education Act 2005, the school must provide a copy of this report free of charge to certain categories of people. A charge not exceeding the full cost of reproduction may be made for any other copies supplied.

Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

Woodside School is a large special school situated in the borough of Bexley. All but a few who are undergoing assessment have a statement of special educational needs. Just over half of the pupils have moderate learning difficulties and the remainder have difficulties associated with autism. Other identified needs include speech and language and social, emotional and behavioural difficulties. In 2007, the school gained specialist school status for sports and for personal, social and health education specialisms. In September 2008, the school started to provide for the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) and currently has one child in the stage. The school also holds various awards including Investors in People, Activemark, Sportsmark and Healthy School.

Key for inspection grades

Grade 1	Outstanding
Grade 2	Good
Grade 3	Satisfactory
Grade 4	Inadequate

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

Woodside School provides its pupils with a satisfactory standard of education. Good support and guidance promotes the pupils' personal development well.

The school has a pleasant climate for learning due to the good relationships between pupils and staff. The pupils are happy in school and this view is endorsed by their parents and carers, who give overwhelming support to the school's work.

The pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. They make a good contribution to the local and wider communities through fund-raising, and some have ambassador roles on behalf of the school. Their involvement on the school council is taken very seriously. They behave well in lessons and in the playground and largely ignore occasional lapses by a few who find it difficult to manage their behaviour. Pupils' participation in sport is wholehearted. They know that staff are there to help them with any problems they experience.

The pupils' progress in their learning is satisfactory overall. Progress has been adversely affected by inconsistent assessment that impaired the staff's ability to set accurate targets in all subjects. This has been identified by senior staff who are in the process of making improvements to assessment and the curriculum, with the aim of raising pupils' achievement levels. The quality of the curriculum and teaching are satisfactory. Some lessons are of good quality and typified by good pace and high expectations. There is still more work to be done to ensure that teaching is of a consistently high standard and that the curriculum meets the full range of pupils' learning needs. The school has already implemented some changes to the curriculum, and training has taken place to improve lesson planning; this has included instruction in the use of clear learning objectives to ensure that pupils understand what they are expected to learn. The impact of this development is not yet fully evident in all classrooms. Speech and language therapy has a positive impact on the pupils' abilities to access the curriculum, and they receive good support in making the transition from school to college life.

Leadership and management are satisfactory, as is the improvement since the last inspection. The processes involved in the school's recent successful application for specialist status required senior managers to establish a clearer view of its own effectiveness. Recently created management teams are starting to use progress information to evaluate developments in teaching and the curriculum. Their work is beginning to be shared with governors to give them better-quality information that will enable them to become a critical friend. The governing body provides good support in relation to personnel and finances. The uncertainty about the school's future role within the local authority has adversely affected the governors' ability to plan long term; they nevertheless fulfil their duties satisfactorily and ensure that the pupils are suitably safeguarded. The school's status as a specialist school is well regarded by its partners and the improved self-evaluation procedures are having a positive impact on its ability to improve further.

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

Grade: 3

The provision has been operational for nearly three months, with one child on roll. Staff have undertaken relevant training in planning and assessment procedures for the Early Years Foundation Stage and this is having a good impact on this very new provision. The curriculum is based on relevant guidance, and all teaching and learning takes place alongside pupils in Key

Stage 1 who are working at a similar level, which, understandably, is well below that expected for children of a similar age nationally. All areas of learning are covered during the week, and early indications suggest that satisfactory progress is being made, especially in personal development.

What the school should do to improve further

- Monitor the planned improvements to the curriculum and the quality of teaching and learning so that all pupils achieve as well as they can.
- Ensure that all managers and governors play a full role in evaluating the school's effectiveness.
- Improve the quality of teaching by ensuring learning objectives are precise and clearly understood by pupils.

A small proportion of the schools whose overall effectiveness is judged satisfactory, but which have areas of underperformance, will receive a monitoring visit by an Ofsted inspector before their next section 5 inspection.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 3

The pupils make expected gains within P levels and they make sound progress towards the lower levels of the National Curriculum. Sometimes good progress is evident, as is underachievement. Senior staff correctly identified weaknesses in assessment procedures that prevented accurate target setting, which in turn led to some pupils not being appropriately challenged. The school has implemented new procedures to improve the accuracy of target setting for individuals and year groups, although it is too early to judge their full impact on achievement.

At the end of Key Stage 4, pupils leave school with some nationally recognised accreditation at entry level and GCSE. The range of accredited courses has improved since the last inspection and expectations for achievement have similarly risen, for example in English, mathematics and physical education. The school's focus on sporting achievement as part of its specialist status has had a positive effect on raising pupils' physical skills.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils work and play well together. They enjoy one another's company, maintain good relationships, and know how to keep themselves and others safe. They report themselves as feeling safe at school, but some experience problems with pupils from other schools when using public transport. Within school, the pupils are trusting of adults and confident that they will get the help they need to manage any difficulties as they arise.

Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. They learn about other's faiths and visit places of worship, and study art of different cultures. Older pupils take responsibility for looking after younger pupils, and some act as ambassadors in the community on the school's behalf. The school council meets regularly and takes its responsibilities very seriously. Through fund-raising activities for good causes, and discussions in personal, social, health and citizenship lessons, the pupils show a good awareness of those less fortunate than themselves. Older pupils become increasingly independent, using public transport, and this prepares them well for life at college. On leaving school, the vast majority choose to continue education or training, which shows the value they place on continued learning.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

The satisfactory quality of teaching enables most pupils to make sound progress in their learning. In the best lessons, teachers' planning ensures that activities support pupils' individual targets. In this way, staff manage the wide range of ability within the class well. Appropriate consideration is given to creating the right learning environment in relation to pupils' needs. For example, some pupils focus best where the walls are plain and display is minimal, whereas others respond well to vibrant displays and bright colours.

Teachers have appropriate subject knowledge for the range of subjects they teach, although the school is aware of the need to extend its expertise as expectations for GCSEs increase. Staff enjoy good relationships with students, and behaviour management is effective. The most successful teaching is evident where the content and teaching style are totally engaging. In physical education, pupils are encouraged to develop their physical skills alongside an understanding of basic physiology. Increasingly good use is made of the end-of-lesson plenaries where pupils reflect upon what they learned. Expectations of behaviour are appropriate and the management of occasional outbursts is effective, reducing disruption to learning.

Some pupils' work indicates too little challenge, as evidenced, for example, by extensive pieces of work with no mistakes or corrections. The school's recently revised curriculum for older pupils gives good guidance for writing precise learning objectives. This has yet to be adopted by all teachers, and as a result some students are unclear about exactly what is expected from them. On occasions, stated learning objectives merely describe what the teacher is going to do and not what the students are expected to learn.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

The curriculum has been subject to extensive review in light of senior management's improved view of the pupils' needs. The provision meets the diverse needs of all groups. Staff have taken good account of national guidance in relation to those learning at lower levels of the National Curriculum. There has been a recent improvement in the range of accreditation available for those capable of achieving higher awards, including Business and Technology Education Council qualifications, entry level and GCSE examinations. There is an extensive range of visits, and visitors to the school, that provide good support to raising pupils' self-esteem and awareness of the world outside school. Although the significant amount of time used for 'out and about' activities is well used, it would benefit from a clear policy that emphasises its place in the curriculum. The extra-curricular activities, including clubs, are fully subscribed, offer good opportunities for choice, and have a beneficial effect upon all pupils' health and well-being.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

There are good systems to ensure the health and safety of the students. The pastoral care of students is good and is based on extensive knowledge of individuals. The input of speech and language therapy is well managed to ensure that time out of lessons is minimised. Relationships with other agencies are effective and designed to improve the quality of education provided. For example, recent links have been established with a professional association specialising in

autism. Pupils know their targets for improving behaviour and respond well to the points system. Older pupils are not routinely involved in setting targets for themselves, which is a missed opportunity to develop autonomy. Teachers and their assistants hold regular meetings and work well together to support individual needs. The school has recently introduced the systematic collation of behavioural information, and analysis of this data shows that the number of incidents has reduced as a result of improved lunchtime activities. There are well-established links with external support agencies. Systems for academic guidance are satisfactory, although some subject reports are too brief to be meaningful. To support life after school, links are well established with Connexions, local colleges of further education, and work placements. Last year almost all leavers went on to employment, training or further education, which is a good indicator of the support they received. Procedures for ensuring the appropriateness of all staff are in place and conform to current government guidance. Parents are overwhelmingly supportive. Comments included, 'We are extremely pleased with the school, as our child has made amazing progress since starting at Woodside...the headteacher makes us feel welcome.' A small minority would like to see greater use of the home/school diary, especially where their children have communication difficulties. A few parents expressed concerns about behaviour, although in school it is good, and pupils report themselves to feel safe in school.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

The leadership and management of the school by the headteacher, senior staff and governors are satisfactory. Despite some staffing difficulties, in a short time the school's specialist status has had a good impact on the school's ability to monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of its provision by improved analysis of achievement. The headteacher has enabled senior managers to establish a clearer view of the school's strengths and areas for development. These include the establishment of more accurate procedures for analysing pupils' progress, implementing required changes to the curriculum, and the need to continue to improve teaching and learning. Some of these changes are not yet fully implemented but they provide a sound basis for further improvement planning. This also reflects the accuracy of the school's self-evaluation.

The school has recognised the need to develop its middle managers so that they can play a more active role in monitoring their subjects and classroom practice. The management of subjects rests with curriculum development teams that have responsibility for clusters of subjects across the age range. These teams recently made good use of progress data to review the effectiveness of their areas. This evaluation has led to more-able pupils being offered more challenging examinations in Key Stage 4. The recent addition of the EYFS has required additional staff training, using up-to-date guidance to ensure the provision meets requirements, including the extension of outdoor play areas.

Overall, governors support the school satisfactorily but in some areas, such as matters concerning the premises, their support has been good. They have been closely involved in protracted negotiations with the local authority regarding the school's future role. They carry out their statutory obligations but are only just beginning to get the information they require to act as a critical friend to the school.

Any complaints about the inspection or the report should be made following the procedures set out in the guidance 'Complaints about school inspection', which is available from Ofsted's website: www.ofsted.gov.uk.

Annex A

Inspection judgements

Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate	School Overall
---	----------------

Overall effectiveness

How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners?	3
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well being?	2
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	3

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

How effective is the provision in meeting the needs of children in the EYFS?	3
How well do children in the EYFS achieve?	3
How good are the overall personal development and well-being of the children in the EYFS?	2
How effectively are children in the EYFS helped to learn and develop?	3
How effectively is the welfare of children in the EYFS promoted?	3
How effectively is provision in the EYFS led and managed?	3

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	3
The standards ¹ reached by learners	4
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	3
How well learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make progress	3

¹Grade 1 - Exceptionally and consistently high; Grade 2 - Generally above average with none significantly below average; Grade 3 - Broadly average to below average; Grade 4 - Exceptionally low.

Personal development and well-being

How good are the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	2
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2
The extent to which learners enjoy their education	2
The attendance of learners	3
The behaviour of learners	2
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	2
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	2

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of learners' needs?	3
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	3
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	2

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	3
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	3
How effectively leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	3
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	3
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination eliminated	2
How well does the school contribute to community cohesion?	2
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	3
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	3
Do procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements?	Yes
Does this school require special measures?	No
Does this school require a notice to improve?	No

Annex B**Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection**

03 December 2008

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Woodside School, Belvedere, DA17 6DW

Thank you for helping me and my colleague to get to know your school last week, and for your warm welcome. We found that you make satisfactory progress while at the school. Your headteacher and senior management team have been working hard to enable the school to give you the education you need now and in the future.

The teaching you receive from the staff is satisfactory but sometimes it is better. You get lots of support to help you improve your work and it is clear that you become more confident as you get older. Your behaviour is good overall. Your attendance is better, and this can help you improve how good your grades are when you take exams. The school is now able to offer you more exams than before.

You obviously enjoy practical lessons such as physical education and art. The lesson I saw where you were practising athletics and orienteering in the multi-use games area was really good. It is clear to see that you know how important exercise is in keeping healthy. You get lots of chances to use the community for your studies. This helps you to get around on your own and develop an understanding of the world of work and college. You get on well with the staff and your fellow pupils, and it is good that you remain focused even when one or two find it difficult to behave.

The school works hard to keep you fit and healthy, and breaks are well used to ensure this. Your behaviour is good and you told me that you feel safe at school, even if some of you have a hard time when travelling to and from school. I have let your headteacher know about this and she will do what she can to improve things for you. You also told me you would like some parts of the school to be in better condition: the school governors are doing what they can to help. In order to improve the school further, I am asking your headteacher to see that all managers and governors monitor just how well you are doing, and what the impact is of any changes they introduce. I am also asking her to see that teachers make it very clear exactly what you are intended to learn in each lesson.

Yours sincerely

Greg Sorrell

Lead Inspector