

Woodlands School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	131521
Local Authority	Warwickshire
Inspection number	341156
Inspection dates	9–10 December 2009
Reporting inspector	Jo Curd

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	2–19
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in the sixth form	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	107
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	15
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Wilf Woodhouse
Headteacher	Gill Simpson
Date of previous school inspection	5 March 2009
School address	Packington Lane Coleshill B46 3JE
Telephone number	01675 463 590
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by three additional inspectors. The inspectors visited 14 lessons and held meetings with governors, staff and pupils. They observed the school's work, and looked at planning, local authority reports, safeguarding documents, school policies, the school development plan and 51 parental questionnaires.

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

- the progress different groups of pupils and students make throughout the school
- the effectiveness of communication, including signing and symbols, around the school
- how well the curriculum meets the needs of all pupils and helps prepare them for later life and learning.

Information about the school

This average sized special school opened in 2006. It is an amalgamation of two other special schools and now caters for pupils and students with a very wide range of special needs and disabilities, including autistic spectrum disorders, moderate, severe, complex and profound and multiple learning difficulties. Some pupils also have profound physical disabilities. Three quarters of pupils are boys. The proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals is higher than the national average. A very small minority of pupils are from minority ethnic backgrounds. A very few pupils are looked after by foster families. All but the very youngest have statements for special educational needs. The school was awarded Healthy School's status in 2008.

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?

2

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

2

Main findings

Pupils and students enjoy being at this happy, friendly, extremely caring school. They gain confidence and high self-esteem and feel very safe because they are kind and considerate towards each other and know that they are very well cared for and supported. Personal and social development, including life skills, are given extremely high priority in all that the school does. Pupils' comments, facial expressions and demeanours, especially as they come into school each day, indicate how very happy they all are. The vast majority of parents are very positive about the school and all that it offers. As one said, 'Woodlands is a really good school. My son really loves the school, staff are really helpful, friendly and caring.'

Pupils make good progress in their learning and development because they engage in a diverse range of interesting, worthwhile activities and are supported extremely well. Many gain appropriate qualifications such as Entry Levels and very occasionally GCSEs. However, progress is sometimes slowed because the quality of teaching is not always sufficiently good. Sometimes, especially in the secondary department, staff focus on keeping students occupied and maintaining good behaviour rather than on what each student learns. Occasionally, opportunities for students, especially in the sixth form, to practise and develop their basic skills within more practical situations are limited. Excellent partnerships with other schools, professionals and businesses in the community make learning relevant for life and help pupils develop a very good understanding of how to stay healthy and safe. Photographs show how much young children enjoy visits from the fire service and police and letters relate how much older students contribute to, and gain from, work experience placements.

Relationships throughout the school are very warm, supportive and positive. Skilled, experienced and very sensitive teaching assistants and a full time nurse make significant contributions to excellent care and good progress. Pupils are extremely caring and supportive to each other. As one said, 'We all help each other'. Older pupils help care for younger ones. A complete range of pupils enjoy a wide variety of lunch-time clubs, including country dancing, music and computing. Although pupils help each other in lessons, cooperative work is slightly limited because signing and the use of symbols is not consistent across the school. All staff now use signs and symbols individually with those who need these. This is an improvement since the last inspection even though total communication does not yet pervade school life. Governors are very supportive of the school and challenge aspects they feel confident about. They do not feel sufficiently competent however to question some aspects such as teaching and progress and do not hold the school fully to account.

Senior leaders use their accurate self-evaluation effectively to develop and improve all

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aspects of provision, including the quality of teaching. They use assessments well to focus support and set appropriate targets for all. Systems to track pupil's progress throughout the school are increasingly effective. A successful track record, well-focussed leaders and managers, the positive attitudes of pupils and effective systems to evaluate practice and ensure excellent care all indicate that the capacity for sustained improvement is good.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve teaching, especially in the secondary department, by focussing on and maximising what each student learns throughout the lesson.
 - Improve the curriculum, especially in the sixth form, by ensuring that effective opportunities for students to use and extend their basic skills in English and mathematics are incorporated throughout the day.
 - Develop the use of signs and symbols across the school to enable all pupils to learn effectively from each other.
 - Develop governors' confidence and skill so that they are able to hold the school to account on all matters including teaching and community cohesion.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils**2**

Pupils are confident, friendly and well-behaved. Their commitment to healthy lifestyles and feelings of safety are excellent. Behaviour is good. The behaviour and attitude of many pupils who join the school in Key stages 2, 3 and 4 quickly improves as students feel understood, accepted and valued. Those who have emotional, social and behavioural difficulties develop extremely well due to excellent care and management techniques. Pupils learn to resolve and manage disputes well and know that staff will support them with any difficulties.

Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is excellent. Pupils are very clear of right and wrong. Relationships are excellent and pupils value and respect each other's differences and needs. They learn about a wide range of cultures and faiths, including a recent project on Africa where they dyed cloth and enjoyed dance, drama and song. Attendance, largely due to ill health, is in line with the national average. Pupils contribute extremely well to the school and wider community through doing jobs around the school, helping each other, making bird boxes for the school's neighbours and raising money for charities.

Progress is good because pupils benefit from a very broad range of activities and experiences and are cared for and supported very well. Older students gain appropriate formal qualifications, such as Entry Levels, very occasionally GCSEs and other national accreditations. There are no discernable patterns in the progress between different groups of students. Given their hugely diverse skills and needs all pupils, including those with autistic spectrum disorders and different levels of difficulty, achieve well. Progress is sometimes slowed, however, because teaching particularly higher up the school is not

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always sufficiently good. Opportunities to learn from peers are occasionally reduced because not all pupils know or use signs and symbols. Excellent behaviour, attitudes and self esteem will stand pupils in good stead in later life and learning, even though the development of basic skills of literacy and numeracy is satisfactory.

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	2
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	3
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1

How effective is the provision?

Care, guidance and support are excellent. This contributes significantly to good behaviour and the development of pupils' confidence and self-esteem. Independence is encouraged but pupils are all helped as much as necessary. The school building is spacious, attractive and accessible. Excellent links with other schools, colleges and Connexions staff ensure that admission to the school and exit into work, college or other provision is smooth. Very good knowledge about all pupils aids the possibility for many to spend time in mainstream provision which helps their learning, social skills 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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contribution to the community. Systems to maximise attendance are effective even though some pupils have considerable time off for inherent health difficulties.

The quality of teaching varies across the school and is satisfactory overall. The majority of lessons are good, making effective use of teachers' assessments and knowledge of pupils' needs. Some very imaginative activities in the primary department engage pupils well and help their enjoyment, behaviour and learning. In one lesson, Year 5 pupils developed their mathematical, linguistic and social skills well through role-play in a 'shop'. Pupils were engaged, interested, calm and well-behaved as they took it in turns to wear a hat, select and use money to buy items from another pupil who was the 'shop-keeper'. This use of a hat successfully helped them take turns and develop their awareness of the need to be warm to go out in cold weather. Pupils in a Year 10 English lesson all made good progress in activities which were varied and well matched to their particular level and style of learning. A teaching assistant skilfully used various objects to support a story about a dog. A girl with profound and multiple learning difficulties listened attentively and then answered questions about the story by looking at the objects the assistant held up. Other lessons, especially in the secondary department, are less successful because some staff give greater emphasis to activities which will occupy pupils and maintain good behaviour at the expense of helping them each to progress. Learning is inadequate in a few of these lessons because there is insufficient focus on the progress each pupil makes.

The curriculum is accessible and appropriate. A very broad range of interesting, enriching experiences contributes to excellent behaviour, good progress, personal development and preparation for later life and learning. Opportunities for many pupils to spend time in mainstream schools, or for pupils from these schools to share in activities at Woodlands, is beneficial to all and makes a significant contribution to community cohesion. Links with colleges, mainstream schools and the use of specialist English and mathematics teachers successfully help many students gain nationally recognised qualifications and accreditations. Pupils' comments and responses to school questionnaires indicate that they enjoy their learning and feel positive about school. All required areas are included and adapted to suit pupils' interests and needs.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The quality of teaching Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	3
	3
The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships	2
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	1

How effective are leadership and management?

Leaders and managers have high aspirations for the school and for all pupils'

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development. These are evident in their excellent partnerships with other professionals, schools and the local community, which are used extremely well to provide outstanding care and many varied opportunities to develop all pupils' confidence, self-esteem and skills for life. Accurate lesson monitoring has been used well to improve the quality of teaching even though pockets of weakness remain. They know that staff use signs and symbols well to communicate with individual pupils but have not always been sufficiently vigilant in looking at the effective use of these across the whole school.

Governors are very supportive and vigilant in ensuring pupils receive high quality support and are kept safe. Systems to safeguard health and safety are excellent, training is up to date, risk assessments are very thorough and office staff play a significant part in ensuring that only those authorised have access to the school. Governors find it difficult to recruit parents to the governing body, however, and its members do not always feel confident to hold the school to account or provide sufficient challenge. Links with parents are good through newsletters and communication books although direct contact with some parents is fairly limited. The school's impact on community cohesion locally is very good. Pupils at other schools benefit greatly from their contact with pupils from Woodlands, local businesses appreciate input from Woodlands work experience students, neighbours appreciate the bird boxes pupils have made and pupils contribute well in many local events such as sports competition and arts festivals. The school's impact nationally and internationally is less well developed.

These are the grades for leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	2
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	2
The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met	3
The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers	2
The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being	1
The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	2
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	1
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	3
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	2

Early Years Foundation Stage

Inspection grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory, and 4 is inadequate

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The Early Years Foundation Stage is attractive and accessible. The experienced and knowledgeable leader has adapted national requirements well to meet all the children's diverse needs. They are all cared for very well. Opportunities for children to start at two years old mean that their particular difficulties or needs can be assessed and supported very early on. They clearly enjoy school and engage in a wide range of imaginative, highly suitable activities indoors and out. Progress is good because accommodation, activities and resources are effective, teaching is good and care is excellent. Strong links with parents, other schools and professionals such as speech therapists, contribute well to children's development and learning. Effective leadership and management successfully maintain and develop good provision and outcomes but do not always ensure continuity across the Nursery and Reception classes, for example, signs, symbols and total communication are not always used sufficiently consistently to enable all the children to communicate with each other.

These are the grades for the Early Years Foundation Stage

Overall effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
Taking into account:	
Outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
The quality of provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
The effectiveness of leadership and management of the Early Years Foundation Stage	2

Sixth form

Students benefit greatly from their time in the sixth form. Effective leadership and management ensure that all students are extremely well cared for and supported. Staff successfully help them develop skills for life through engaging in a diverse range of activities and opportunities. Wherever appropriate, they integrate into local colleges or work experience placements. Most gain appropriate accreditations and qualifications, and all students make good progress. This is sometimes slightly slowed, however, because basic reading, writing and mathematical skills are not always sufficiently well incorporated into all that students do. All the students are encouraged to become as independent as possible. They contribute well to their community through jobs around the school such as recycling waste paper, helping care for younger pupils and preparing lunch for visitors. Students enjoy their time at school, particularly their relationships with each other and staff, celebrations such as a local special school's 'prom' and lunch clubs. Relationships are warm and positive even though communication between some students is limited due to inconsistent knowledge and use of symbols and signs. Accommodation is spacious and organised well to help students prepare for later life.

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These are the grades for the sixth form

Overall effectiveness of the sixth form	2
Taking into account:	
Outcomes for students in the sixth form	2
The quality of provision in the sixth form	2
Leadership and management of the sixth form	2

Views of parents and carers

The overwhelming majority of responses from parents and carers were positive. All responses about pupils' enjoyment, safety and progress and the school's quality of teaching and leadership and management were positive. A very small minority of responses expressed some concerns which were explored during the inspection. Findings supported a concern about the use of communication throughout the school. This is identified as an area which the school now needs to develop and improve.

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 37 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 102 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	34	92	3	8	0	0	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	33	89	4	11	0	0	0	0
The school informs me about my child's progress	26	70	10	27	0	0	1	3
My child is making enough progress at this school	25	68	12	32	0	0	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	32	86	4	11	0	0	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	24	57	15	41	1	3	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	24	65	12	32	1	3	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)	25	68	8	22	2	5	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	25	68	11	30	1	3	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	24	65	9	34	1	3	0	0
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	23	62	11	30	1	3	1	3
The school is led and managed effectively	25	68	11	30	0	0	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	29	78	8	22	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

	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
Type of school	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:	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. ■ 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.



14 December 2009

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Woodlands School, Colehill, B46 3JE

Thank you for being friendly and helpful when we visited your school recently. It was a pleasure to meet so many of you and see you working and playing together. We were also delighted to see photographs of many other wonderful, exciting things which you all do in and out of school.

We think your school is good because you are all cared for and supported extremely well and benefit from a huge range of activities. We particularly liked your lunchtime clubs, visits from the police, fire service and theatre groups. These help you learn about life outside school and develop a very good understanding of health and safety. You all behave very well because you enjoy school, care about each other and know that staff will help you if you find things difficult. Your progress is good. Staff use signs and symbols well to communicate with those of you who need this but do not encourage you all to use these throughout the day.

We have asked your leaders to improve four things. These are to:

- make sure that lessons always help your learning as well as your behaviour
- make sure that there are enough opportunities for you to improve your reading, writing and mathematics through all the activities which you do
- help you all use signing and symbols more frequently so that you can communicate better with each other
- help governors become more confident and able to question the school about all that it does with and for you.

Perhaps you could help by continuing to work hard and behave well and encouraging each other to use signs and symbols more often around the school.

With best wishes to you all.

Yours sincerely

Jo Curd

Lead Inspector

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