



Woodlands School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 122962
LEA CITY OF NOTTINGHAM LEA
Inspection number 281372
Inspection dates 15 March 2006 to 16 March 2006
Reporting inspector Mr. George Derby LI

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

Type of school	Special	School address	Beechdale Road
School category	Community special		NG8 3EZ
Age range of pupils	5 to 16		
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	0115 915 5734
Number on roll	72	Fax number	0115 915 5736
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair of governors	Mr. Hugh Reynolds
Date of previous inspection	11 December 2000	Headteacher	Mrs. Ann Davies

Age group 5 to 16	Inspection dates 15 March 2006 - 16 March 2006	Inspection number 281372
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

Woodlands School caters for an extremely wide range of pupils. This includes pupils with severe learning difficulties, moderate learning difficulties, social, emotional and behavioural difficulties as well as pupils with autism. Some pupils have a diagnosed mental health condition. The school draws from a wide area within the City of Nottingham and has a few pupils from nearby local authorities. At nearly 60%, the proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals is very high. 17% of pupils are from a range of minority ethnic groups. In this average size special school, boys outnumber girls by five to one. Although the school is able to admit children of nursery or reception age, the youngest pupils in the school currently are in Year 1. Just over 75% of pupils are of secondary school age. The school has been led by an acting headteacher and acting deputy headteacher since 2002. At the same time, the local authority announced that there was to be a review of special school provision. This is still ongoing. Staff absence has been high for many years.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 4

The school has made some progress recently in reorganising its provision for its pupils with complex needs and providing a more settled environment for the pupils. Its care for them is satisfactory and the way it works with parents and outside agencies is good. However, the school has had difficulties managing its considerable staffing problems, some pupils' unsatisfactory behaviour and the mix of such a wide range of pupils' needs. As a result, even though the situation is better compared with the past few years, the school is failing to give an acceptable standard of education for its pupils. The school is in a fragile state, with teaching that is unsatisfactory, difficulties in meeting the needs of all pupils, and a high number of exclusions. The curriculum is inadequate. French is not taught at all and a few subjects are only partly taught. Given this and the weaknesses in teaching, the pupils' progress in lessons and their achievement overall are unsatisfactory. The acting headteacher and acting deputy headteacher have worked hard to maintain discipline and provide a safe environment for the pupils that the school has been asked to admit. Much of their work has been a reaction to the situations arising, such as staff illness and the budget deficit, which is now reducing. It is only recently that more thought is being given to the school's future development. However, the current improvement plan has come to an end and no new plan has yet been formulated. Overall, leadership and management are inadequate. The senior team's and the governors' capacity to move the school forward, without substantial support, is limited. The school does not have sufficiently robust ways of assessing its own performance to help build on its strengths or address its weaknesses. It is unable to set a full range of targets for whole school improvement. In the light of all this, its evaluation of how well it is doing is too generous. Value for money is unsatisfactory. In accordance with section 13 (3) of the Education Act 2005, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector is of the opinion that this school requires special measures because it is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the persons responsible for leading, managing or governing the school are not demonstrating the capacity to secure the necessary improvement in the school.

What the school should do to improve further

- Improve the quality of teaching and learning to make sure that the pupils' work is matched to their different learning needs and that they make faster progress. - Reduce the number of exclusions by taking more effective steps to manage and improve pupils' behaviour. - Ensure that the curriculum meets all requirements. - Improve the leadership and management at all levels, especially strategic planning, the monitoring and evaluation of all aspects of the school's work and the use of information to plan for improvement.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 4

Pupils' achievement is unsatisfactory overall. As a result of a narrow curriculum and work which is not always matched sufficiently to their needs and abilities, many pupils do not make the progress they should. By the time they leave the school, the standards pupils achieve are generally well below average, although some achieve adequately in a narrow range of examinations and awards. They do best in the Youth Award. Many gain low level passes at Entry Level in English and mathematics. The school is aiming to expand the subjects available for accreditation at Key Stage 4 but a lack of specialist teachers makes this very difficult. Data from the recently introduced reading strategy targeted at a small number of specific pupils show that some have made impressive gains over a short period. However, secondary age pupils generally show weaknesses in phonic knowledge and spelling, although many are willing to improve their writing. Some also demonstrate weak mental strategies in mathematics when solving problems. There are missed opportunities to improve the pupils' skills in these areas. As a result, the pupils are held back from working independently. The school is unable to set whole school targets to raise achievement because its assessment systems have not been securely in place until now. The school will only have its first set of targets for pupils' progress in June. However, targets to improve behaviour and academic achievement are set for individual pupils. For example, weekly targets are set for pupils' response in lessons and pupils are keen to do well against these. However, there is insufficient emphasis on how well the pupils have made progress against their academic targets. The school has not been in a position to track pupils' progress accurately until the introduction of the new assessment system last autumn.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 3

The personal development of pupils is satisfactory. Most pupils enjoy coming to school and feel happy and safe. Any incidents of bullying are seen by pupils to be swiftly and fairly dealt with. The behaviour of most pupils seen during the inspection was good and for the most part they responded well in lessons. However, records show a large number of incidents of difficult behaviour and a high number of temporary exclusions. Because of this, behaviour overall is unsatisfactory. These exclusions are partly as a result of the school's response to managing challenging behaviour and keeping the school calm and safe. Staff work closely with parents to improve the children's behaviour and this is having a positive effect. The school has worked hard to raise attendance to a satisfactory level. A small number of pupils are persistent absentees. Pupils' moral and social development is satisfactory. There is sound understanding of class and school rules and many pupils try hard to meet their daily behaviour and performance targets. However, some pupils find it hard to comply with these. Relationships are satisfactory. Older pupils often support and help younger pupils in the mixed age classes. Pupils develop satisfactory spiritual awareness through religious education and the occasional assemblies. They are able to reflect on their work or behaviour. Cultural awareness is limited. The pupils are encouraged to eat healthily

and most see the importance of this and of taking regular exercise. Many pupils attend sports activities at lunchtimes. Pupils help to contribute to their own school community, through assemblies, end of term events and school fairs, and to the wider community through raising money for charities such as 'Children in Need'. Pupils develop sound economic awareness through developing their basic literacy and money handling skills, and through personal, social and health education and life skills lessons. Older pupils participate well in work experience and learn about careers opportunities. However, many pupils find it hard to think for themselves, and their skills of self-reliance and independence are limited.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 4

Teaching and learning are inadequate. While there are examples of good and satisfactory teaching, too much is unsatisfactory. In the best lessons, pupils are managed well and work builds on their previous knowledge and skills in small, successful steps. Teaching assistants provide good support and know what they are required to do in lessons. In effective lessons, planning makes clear what pupils should learn and pupils know what they are to do. Relationships between adults and pupils are strong and many staff build upon these to successfully engage pupils in learning. However, even in satisfactory lessons, planning is generally weak and pupils do not have a clear view of what they are to learn. Objectives are not always shared and introductions are more about organising the pupils than about learning. In too many lessons, learning is not sufficiently reviewed and opportunities are missed to reinforce aspects that pupils find difficult. The work is often insufficiently matched to the pupils' wide ranging needs and the pace of lessons is slow. Time is not used well to promote learning, for example, when pupils are given too much leisure time in lessons as a reward. Lessons frequently start late and are often not the ones shown on the timetable. There is very little use of information and communication technology (ICT) to support teaching or learning. Pupils are not expected to do enough for themselves. Teachers' knowledge of the pupils' wide ranging needs is sometimes weak and their knowledge of some subjects in the secondary department is limited. For example, only two of the staff team are subject specialists. Teaching assistants are important members of the team and are generally used well to manage pupils' behaviour and support learning. Occasionally, they do not always anticipate reactions to situations by pupils and this can result in disagreement and upset. The school's newly introduced system for assessing pupils' level of attainment is satisfactory. However, the school does not make sufficient use of all the information it collects and only a narrow range of aspects of pupils' achievement and personal development is assessed.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 4

The curriculum is inadequate. The school has worked hard to adapt its curriculum for the wide range of needs and has, at times, been moderately successful in doing this. However, the need to regularly reorganise teaching groups to provide a better mix of pupils, to manage behaviour and to cope with staffing difficulties adversely affects the pupils' progress. The school has introduced a topic based approach in order to counter this and to provide interesting and relevant work. However, the way this is organised means that it is not always easy to ensure that work is pitched appropriately for the very wide age ranges. A particular strength is in the life skills programme for older pupils. These well-planned work experience and college placements help prepare pupils for adult life and give them an awareness of the world of work. Statutory requirements are not met. There are large gaps in the planning and resources for design and technology, and music. Older groups are not taught these subjects fully and some not at all. No modern foreign language is taught. Weak planning in ICT, mathematics and science also detracts from pupils' opportunities for learning and their ability to make progress. The school's timetable is not well planned or followed. Although there are some good elements in the programme of personal and social education, a large number of unstructured sessions reduce the time available for learning and opportunities for enhancing pupils' initiative and independence. This is especially so for pupils in Years 10 and 11. There are several good extra-curricular opportunities that enrich the curriculum, such as the coaching links with a local soccer club and the residential visits. The school has recently increased the access of some pupils to accreditation through the use of GCSE and other examination courses with pupils attending local colleges. There is still a need, however, to extend the accreditation offered, as the range of courses available is still fairly narrow.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 3

Care, guidance and support are satisfactory. A key strength is in the personal welfare of pupils through the detailed knowledge that staff have about their personal needs. This is seen best in the development of individual education plans and behaviour management plans. There are satisfactory policies and systems for child protection, health and safety, and first aid. Risk assessments are made on individual pupils with challenging behaviour and for all pupils on visits out of school. There is good monitoring of attendance records. Good support is given to pupils' emotional development, and health and safety, through the strong partnership with external agencies and liaison with other professionals such as those in social care, educational welfare and the police. The school nurse offers particularly good support for the development of personal social and health education across the school, and has helped the school to achieve the Healthy Schools Award. Although a system for tracking and evaluating the academic progress of pupils, using a commercial scheme, is newly in place and is adequate, this requires further development. Monitoring processes are not used sufficiently to help

staff identify the next stages in learning for pupils, to judge how much progress has been made over a period of time or to set whole-school targets.

Leadership and management

Grade: 4

The leadership and management of the school are inadequate. Staff absence has been a major difficulty. This, coupled with a need to reduce staffing as a result of a fall in pupil numbers and a budget deficit, has put incredible pressures on the school. The acting headteacher and acting deputy headteacher have maintained reasonable day-to-day running in face of these difficulties, although pupils' behaviour and a lack of specialist skills among staff have been considerable barriers to improvement. Some important aspects of the school's work are now improving and the school is a much calmer place. However, there is still much to do in the way of development.

Improvement since the last inspection has been inadequate. Monitoring and evaluation of teaching and learning have not been rigorous enough, subject leaders' skills have not improved sufficiently and school self-evaluation systems are ineffective. The school collects data about a range of outcomes but does not sufficiently analyse this to aid improvement. Aspects of this are getting better, though, and the acting deputy headteacher is well aware that assessment and tracking need to be at the heart of all that is done. The acting headteacher has produced a medium-term development plan which addressed the priorities the school needed to work on over the past two years. Slippage occurred in the major area of assessment and tracking of progress but this is now underway. However, the actions in the plan largely ended in 2005 and no new plan has been constructed. No one was identified as taking responsibility for monitoring the success of the actions in the plan. There is little evidence in documentation that governors have checked on how the plan was progressing or have monitored the school's performance in general. The chair of governors provides good support for the acting headteacher and has a good knowledge of the school in broad terms. He has been the mainstay of the governing body over the past few years as it has been difficult to recruit a full complement of governors. Much of the work has been left to a few people. Since January this has improved. However, overall, the effectiveness of the governing body is unsatisfactory. Senior staff are unable to move the school forward without a great deal of help. They take their individual responsibilities seriously and have developed aspects such as the school's targeted reading programme and taken effective steps to manage the deficit budget. However, they have been less involved as a team in whole school development and have insufficiently been involved in moving the school forward.

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Inspection judgements

<i>Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate</i>	School Overall	16-19
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Overall effectiveness

How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners?	4	NA
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	2	NA
The quality and standards in foundation stage	NA	NA
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	4	NA
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	No	NA
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	No	NA

Achievement and standards

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

Personal development and well-being

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	3	NA
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	3	NA
The behaviour of learners	4	NA
The attendance of learners	3	NA
How well learners enjoy their education	3	NA
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	3	NA
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	3	NA
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	3	NA
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	3	NA

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	4	NA
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	4	NA
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	3	NA

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

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	4	NA
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	4	NA
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets, through quality assurance and self-review	4	NA
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	4	NA
How effectively and efficiently resources are deployed to achieve value for money	4	NA
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	4	NA
The adequacy and suitability of staff to ensure that learners are protected	Yes	NA

The extent to which schools enable learners to be healthy	
Learners are encouraged and enabled to eat and drink healthily	Yes
Learners are encouraged and enabled to take regular exercise	Yes
Learners are discouraged from smoking and substance abuse	Yes
Learners are educated about sexual health	Yes
The extent to which providers ensure that learners stay safe	
Procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements	Yes
Risk assessment procedures and related staff training are in place	Yes
Action is taken to reduce anti-social behaviour, such as bullying and racism	Yes
Learners are taught about key risks and how to deal with them	Yes
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution	
Learners are helped to develop stable, positive relationships	Yes
Learners, individually and collectively, participate in making decisions that affect them	Yes
Learners are encouraged to initiate, participate in and manage activities in school and the wider community	Yes
The extent to which schools enable learners to achieve economic well-being	
There is provision to promote learners' basic skills	Yes
Learners have opportunities to develop enterprise skills and work in teams	Yes
Careers education and guidance is provided to all learners in key stage 3 and 4 and the sixth form	Yes
Education for all learners aged 14–19 provides an understanding of employment and the economy	Yes

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

Thank you for taking the time to talk with us during the inspection, and for showing what you could do in lessons. We enjoyed our time in school and noticed that many of you try to do your best. The older pupils work hard toward their exams and college work and are keen to do well. Your parents are pleased with the school. They find the staff very helpful. Your acting headteacher and acting deputy headteacher have worked hard to make the school a safe and calm place for you to learn. However, there are still many more things that need doing. The staff require lots and lots of help to make the school even better and this is why we have said the school needs 'special measures'. You can lend a hand by listening, watching and by behaving in lessons and around school. You must also come to school regularly. In order to help you to do better in all sorts of ways, we are asking your headteacher to do the following: - Improve the way you are taught, how the work is planned for you and to ensure that you are taught all subjects. - To manage better pupils who have difficult behaviour and to reduce the times when pupils are asked to stay at home because they have behaved inappropriately. - To improve the way the school checks on how well it is doing and how well you are doing. Someone from Ofsted will visit the school regularly to check how it is doing so you will see inspectors again in the near future.