

# Woodlands Secondary School

## Inspection report

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	109744
<b>Local Authority</b>	LUTON
<b>Inspection number</b>	302146
<b>Inspection dates</b>	25–26 April 2007
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	Margaret Jones HMI

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

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<b>Type of school</b>	Special
<b>School category</b>	Community
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	11–19
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number on roll</b>	
School	118
6th form	24
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Clr Don Worlding
<b>Headteacher</b>	Mrs Sheila Read
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	7 February 2000
<b>School address</b>	Northwell Drive Marsh Farm Luton Bedfordshire LU3 3SP
<b>Telephone number</b>	01582572880
<b>Fax number</b>	01582565506

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## Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and one Additional Inspector.

## Description of the school

Woodlands is Luton Borough Council's special school for children with profound, severe and complex learning difficulties and disabilities. All the children have a statement of special educational needs and Woodlands has a designated therapeutic provision. The children come from a wide range of social and economic backgrounds, and almost half are from minority ethnic groups. The school has won many achievement awards including the 'Inclusion Quality Mark', 'Investors in People', 'National Healthy Schools Award' and the 'National Information Communication technology (ICT) Award'.

## Key for inspection grades

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

## Overall effectiveness of the school

### Grade: 2

This is a good school with many outstanding features. This is confirmed by the school's effective and accurate self-evaluation and very good progress since its last inspection. The school is very well led and managed. The headteacher and senior management team provide excellent leadership and have created a welcoming and stimulating place to learn, where every child, whatever their difficulties or disabilities, has the opportunity to achieve. The headteacher has taken a full and active role in establishing this school's place in the local community of schools. As a result, the school now provides valued outreach work for mainstream secondary schools. Although the senior team have correctly identified the way forward for the school, the development plan is a rather unwieldy document. Value for money is excellent and the school has the capacity to become outstanding; it is certainly going in the right direction.

The personal development of learners is outstanding. They behave very well, attend regularly and show great enjoyment in their learning. Learners make an outstanding contribution to their school and local community in many ways, such as helping to write the school rules as part of the school council, running parties for senior citizens and raising money for charity. They enjoy an excellent range of enrichment activities which enable the learners to put their newly acquired skills into practice and are very good preparation for future independent living. This is certainly a school where every child matters. The learners are very well cared for and feel safe and secure. This is contributing to their desire to do well. Learners understand the need for healthy lifestyles and all take part in physical activities. Provision for careers education and guidance is very well organised and effective. All learners go on work experience and there are very good links with local colleges. The school plans to meet the needs of every individual learner and so its curriculum is excellent. Achievement is good and is maintained despite the increase in the severity of the difficulties and disabilities the learners have. Teaching is of a high standard. Learners have excellent relationships with their teachers and helpers and as a result, they make good progress. In a very few lessons, learners are not given sufficient opportunities to use all their senses, or communicate fully using appropriate methods. The overwhelming majority of parents are positive in their views about the school. They feel their views are taken into account and their children are being very well educated.

## Effectiveness and efficiency of the sixth form

### Grade: 2

The provision for learners over 16 has been substantially improved. It now includes a college link for one day a week, practical experiences and work placements for those who are able to participate. Learners enjoy this variety and are motivated to do their best. All the older learners gain national accreditation awards through the ASDAN 'Working Towards Independence' scheme. This gives a structure and framework to the courses, and all work is carefully recorded and assessed. Learners make good progress and are very well supported to make the move into the adult world.

## What the school should do to improve further

- Ensure all teachers use a range of appropriate communication and sensory techniques to meet the needs of the learners.
- Improve the quality of the school improvement plan, by clearly identifying the key priorities for the current year.

## **Achievement and standards**

**Grade: 2**

**Grade for sixth form: 2**

Achievement in the school and in the sixth form is good. Standards are well below national expectations because of the learners' complex learning difficulties. All learners make good progress and some make outstanding progress, both academically and in terms of their physical and emotional needs. Learners from minority ethnic backgrounds are well integrated and supported and achieve as well as other learners. Learners are highly motivated and take a great pride in their achievements and the school celebrates their successes with them. Appropriate individual and school targets are set and learners almost always reach their targets and sometimes exceed them. For example, many learners who had refused to attend schools in the past are now able to take part in class discussions. The system used for analysing how well learners are making progress is effective. It identifies when a learner is not reaching expectations in a particular subject and measures are quickly put in place to rectify the situation.

## **Personal development and well-being**

**Grade: 1**

**Grade for sixth form: 1**

Learners make outstanding progress in their social, moral, spiritual and cultural development. For example all religious festivals are celebrated, supported by a 'signing' choir, and greatly enjoyed. Attendance is good. The learners' behaviour is exemplary. They show that they clearly understand what appropriate behaviour is and how to support each other to behave well. For example, in a spontaneous conversation with puppets, learners acted out how the school helps them to manage their feelings. They show they are becoming independent within their capability range and this raises their confidence and self-esteem. They are friendly and willing to talk to visitors. They know how to stay safe and they learn about being healthy. The learners on the school council provide a voice for others and state what they would like to happen in their school and the school responds to them. They like their school very much and clearly enjoy their learning. Older learners practise skills that will prepare them for the world after school.

## **Quality of provision**

### **Teaching and learning**

**Grade: 2**

**Grade for sixth form: 2**

Teaching and learning are good both in the main school and the post-16 provision and make a positive contribution to the good achievement of the learners. Teachers and assistants build up excellent relationships with learners and act as positive role models. Teachers work hard to plan their lessons so that every learner is included. They have high expectations of learning and behaviour and learners respond well. There are a number of examples where teaching and learning are outstanding, with most teaching being good. Lessons have a variety of interesting activities and maintain pace with opportunities for independent learning. This is helped by the very effective use of skilled teaching assistants and the extensive use of ICT. In one outstanding Year 7 lesson about different religions learners with severe communication difficulties enthusiastically managed to instruct the teacher how to use a prayer mat by using speech,

signing or indicating a yes/no response. The tracking and assessment of the learners' understanding and progress is a strong feature of the school. However, a few teachers do not always give learners sufficient opportunities to use all their senses, or to communicate fully using a range of methods. This slows progress for some learners.

## **Curriculum and other activities**

**Grade: 1**

**Grade for sixth form: 1**

The curriculum is planned exceptionally well and caters for the wide range of learning difficulties and disabilities, as well as for the emotional and social needs that learners have whilst at the school. Learners benefit from working with a wide range of classmates with differing needs and they make better progress because of this inclusive approach. An appropriate range of accreditation, which helps to motivate learners to do their best, is in place.

Enrichment activities are excellent and often allow learners to apply their knowledge and understanding to everyday tasks, for example, going to the local shops, doing the washing up in the flat, running a mini-enterprise or working in the allotment. Provision for the Arts is outstanding and learners produce high quality work which is displayed creatively around the school and is an inspiration for learning. There is a good range of extra-curricular clubs but this provision has been hampered recently by lack of funding for transport.

## **Care, guidance and support**

**Grade: 1**

**Grade for sixth form: 1**

The school provides outstanding care and support for the personal, medical, physical and emotional needs of all the learners. All staff ensure that learners' dignity is maintained at all times, and are respectful of their individual needs. If there are concerns about a particular learner an urgent, multi-agency meeting is called, where all can express their views and work out the best course of action to help the learner. Teaching assistants are well trained and are an integral part of class teams. They are fully involved in planning and the organisation and making of resources. The procedures for protecting learners and keeping them safe are meticulous. The additional therapeutic support provided by the therapies team is outstanding. This includes: music, art and play therapy and electronic drumming. These activities help learners to recognise their emotions and learn how to manage them. The team also provides advice and training on different approaches for staff within the school and other schools. The procedures for moving from primary schools to Woodlands, and the preparation for when the learners leave the school, are excellent.

## **Leadership and management**

**Grade: 2**

**Grade for sixth form: 2**

The school was re-organised in 2001, since then the leadership team have worked effectively together to create a calm, working atmosphere and to ensure all learners can flourish. The headteacher is dedicated in her vision for a school where all are can achieve, and she successfully puts her ideals into action. The senior leadership team work together efficiently and are very

experienced. They know the school very well and have accurately identified areas for development. However, the school development plan does not clearly identify whole-school priorities for the current year. The role of middle managers is developing and has been enhanced by well focused training and development. Accurate evaluation of teaching has taken place and regular trawls of specific aspects of work are having a positive impact.

The governing body contains professional expertise which is effectively deployed for the benefit of the school. Governors are well informed, supportive and are beginning to develop the confidence to challenge and hold the school to account. The school has a race relations policy but the impact of the implementation of this policy is not assessed. Staff are very effectively deployed for the benefit of the learners and financial planning is outstanding.

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## Annex A

## Inspection judgements

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

<b>How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners?</b>	2	2
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	1	1
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	1	1
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	1	1
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes	Yes

### Achievement and standards

<b>How well do learners achieve?</b>	2	2
The standards <sup>1</sup> reached by learners	4	4
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	2	2
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	2	

### Personal development and well-being

<b>How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?</b>	1	1
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1	
The behaviour of learners	1	
The attendance of learners	2	
How well learners enjoy their education	1	
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	1	
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	2	
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	1	
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	1	

### The quality of provision

<b>How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?</b>	2	2
<b>How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?</b>	1	1
<b>How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?</b>	1	1

<sup>1</sup> Grade 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.

## Annex A

**Leadership and management**

<b>How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?</b>	2	2
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	2	
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets	1	
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	1	
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	1	
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	2	
Do procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements?	Yes	Yes
Does this school require special measures?	No	
Does this school require a notice to improve?	No	

## Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

27 April 2007

Dear Learners

Inspection of Woodlands School, Luton, LU3 3SP

Thank you for all the help you gave us when we visited your school recently. We enjoyed talking with you. We learned about your enthusiasm for your school and how much you enjoy and value all that it has to offer. It is a good school with many things that are excellent. We thought you would like to know what was good about your school and how it could get even better.

- You work hard and try your best in your lessons.
- Teaching is very good and you enjoy practical learning and fun activities, especially in art, music and cooking.
- You support each other and behave very well.
- You play a big part in running your school and helping the community.
- You know how to keep safe and healthy, and are very well prepared for adult life.
- You sing really well in assembly and join in the prayers.
- Staff take excellent care of you and help you feel happy at school so you can concentrate on your learning.
- The headteacher and the leadership team have made many changes to make your school better.
- Money is used very well to buy things that help you, and the displays around the school are beautiful.

We thought that the following things could be improved.

- Teachers could all make sure they use the best ways of communicating with you.
- Planning for the future could be made clearer.

We wish all of you success in your studies and thank you once again for your help with this inspection.

Yours sincerely,

Margaret Jones

Her Majesty's Inspector of Schools