

Woodlands School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	122962
Local Authority	CITY OF NOTTINGHAM
Inspection number	302577
Inspection dates	10–11 July 2007
Reporting inspector	Declan McCarthy

This inspection was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005; it was also deemed a section 5 inspection under the same Act.

Type of school	Special
School category	Community special
Age range of pupils	3–16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	39
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr Hugh Reynolds
Headteacher	Mrs Ann Davies
Date of previous school inspection	15 March 2006
School address	Beechdale Road Aspley Nottingham NG8 3EZ
Telephone number	0115 9155734
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors over two days.

Description of the school

Woodlands is a special school for pupils with complex learning difficulties. These include autistic spectrum disorder, language and communication difficulties, behavioural emotional and social difficulties, moderate and severe learning difficulties, and attention deficit hyperactivity disorder. All pupils have a statement of special educational need and attainment on entry is well below average. Pupils come from the city of Nottingham, including some of the most deprived areas of the city. Nearly all pupils are White British and a small number are from other minority ethnic groups. A high proportion of pupils take free school meals. At its last inspection, the school became subject to special measures. There were also significant staffing difficulties, most of which have now been resolved. The school is undergoing reorganisation and the headteacher and deputy headteacher have been in acting posts for the last five years. The school has been awarded Healthy School status.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

In accordance with section 13 (4) of the Education Act 2005, HMCI is of the opinion that the school no longer requires special measures. Woodlands School is now providing a satisfactory education for its pupils and is improving. The effective leadership of the headteacher, who benefits from good support from the chair of governors, has ensured that the school has made good progress in all areas for improvement identified at the last inspection. The quality of care, support and guidance is good, resulting in the good personal development of pupils. Teaching and the curriculum are now satisfactory and continue to improve. Consequently pupils' achievement is satisfactory. The school provides satisfactory value for money and has a satisfactory capacity to improve further.

Pupils make satisfactory progress during their time in school. Recently they have begun to make good progress in lessons because the quality of teaching in many lessons is good. Older pupils are making good progress in their examination courses. Pupils throughout the school make good progress in literacy, numeracy and personal development because there is a strong emphasis on these areas in the curriculum. Pupils with additional learning needs make satisfactory progress overall, although, those with more complex needs such as persistent school refusers make inadequate progress. The recently introduced work related curriculum for older pupils ensures that they are making good progress in preparation for work and college, contributing well to their preparations for the future. However, recently developed planning in French, religious education (RE) and citizenship does not take sufficient account of the different year groups of pupils. The school intends to introduce drama, music and a specialist literacy programme from September 2007.

Pupils' personal development, including their spiritual, moral and social development is good. Pupils behave well and nearly all attend regularly because there are good systems in place to monitor and promote attendance. This is a reflection of how well they enjoy school. Pupils are encouraged to eat healthily and they take regular exercise. Pupils also make a satisfactory contribution to the community. Good arrangements for child protection and ensuring the safety and welfare of pupils are in place. As a result pupils are safe and feel secure in school.

Teaching and learning has improved as a result of the rigorous monitoring of lessons by the headteacher. This has led to a steady rise in the proportion of good teaching during the last two terms. Teaching is satisfactory overall and rapidly improving. Teachers are now involving pupils in checking how well they are doing in lessons but this is not always consistent enough. Staff are beginning to make good use of new interactive whiteboards in lessons, although there are missed opportunities for pupils to use these interactively to support their learning. Teachers have high expectations for learning, and lessons are more interesting. As a result pupils now enjoy learning. The headteacher receives sound support from the deputy headteacher. However middle managers have yet to fully develop their roles. Governors are beginning to monitor the schools work but they have not fully developed this role.

What the school should do to improve further

- Implement more formal support arrangements for pupils with more complex needs together with regular monitoring in order to raise achievement.
- Improve the quality of teaching further by ensuring all teachers consistently use the interactive whiteboards and involve pupils in their own assessment to support their learning.

- Refine planning in French, RE and citizenship in Years 7 and 8 and ensure the plans for developing music, drama and social and emotional literacy are fully implemented.
- Further develop the monitoring role of middle managers and governors.

A small proportion of 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

Given the complex nature of pupils' learning difficulties and disabilities, standards are well below average. Pupils' achievement is satisfactory overall and they make satisfactory progress towards their individual targets. Pupils have recently begun to make good progress in lessons because teaching and learning have rapidly improved. Older pupils make good progress in their examination courses gaining a range of external qualifications, which includes GCSE mathematics, certificates of achievement in literacy and numeracy, youth awards and entry level certificates. Overall, pupils' progress in literacy, numeracy and in personal and social development is good. Pupils' achievements in other subjects, including ICT during the past year are satisfactory. The progress of pupils with additional learning needs is satisfactory overall but variable. Lower attaining Year 7 pupils make outstanding progress in literacy skills but pupils with more complex needs are not making the progress they should because the school has not yet developed support programmes to meet their needs.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

The school successfully encourages pupils' good personal development and well-being. The strong, positive ethos provides a framework enabling them to appreciate the importance of mutual support and respect. Good behaviour is expected and realised because effective behaviour management is at the forefront of the school's work. Pupils whose behaviour can be especially challenging are sensitively supported and thus potentially volatile situations are skillfully avoided. Pupils have a growing understanding of how to keep safe and healthy; for example, by discussing different kinds of medicines and what they are used for.

Pupils are independent minded, enjoy taking responsibility and are becoming more autonomous because the school is actively encouraging this. They enjoy lessons, especially as many are practical and creative, and they are keen to do their best. They are becoming better at looking at their work and understanding how well they have done.

Their spiritual and cultural understanding is well developed and they are taught to appreciate the needs and rights of others. Pupils develop satisfactory skills in preparation for their life beyond school, with older pupils being especially well prepared through valuable work experience placements. Attendance is satisfactory and improving. Good systems are in place to monitor absenteeism, including earlier contact with parents.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

Inspection findings agree with the school's judgement that teaching and learning are now satisfactory. This represents good progress in improving teaching since the last inspection, which is mainly due to the effective monitoring and support provided by the headteacher. In lessons seen teaching was at least satisfactory with a high proportion of good teaching. Lessons are usually brisk, teachers' planning is good and they have high expectations for learning. As a result learning tasks are matched to the variety of pupils' needs, pupils remain focused on tasks and make good progress. Staff have excellent relationships with pupils and manage their behaviour effectively and there is very good teamwork between teaching assistants and teachers. Consequently pupils show respect, listen carefully, follow instructions and handle resources safely. Teachers provide a rich variety of activities and use resources well so that pupils enjoy learning. For example in a science lesson on seed dispersal, pupils handled a coconut, a sycamore seed and a clock dandelion which helped them to deepen their understanding of different ways of dispersing seeds. Teachers' use of ICT to support learning has recently improved and is now satisfactory. Teachers sometimes do not use the new interactive whiteboards in lessons effectively to promote interactive learning. Teachers' use of assessment is satisfactory with some good examples of pupils involved in their own assessment. This process is not consistently applied in lessons or fully developed across each learning skill.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

The school has a satisfactory curriculum, which is increasingly becoming more creatively inspired. This move has resulted in pupils enjoying lessons more, especially in practical activities such as art, where some good work was seen. A good start has been made in using ICT but there is scope for more use of it in other subjects. There is an accurate evaluation of how the curriculum needs to develop. For example, the school has planned more refinement to ensure pupils develop their skills in RE and French in a methodical way. Adaptations to what is being taught, such as the special reading recovery programme across the school, are working very effectively, resulting in pupils making huge gains in their reading ability. Special days, such as World Book day and Environmental Day, are adding an extra dimension and allowing pupils to immerse themselves in a range of exciting activities. Staff have recently offered an interesting range of clubs and uptake has been good. There are some regular visits out which enhance learning, such as to Ashby Castle, but these are not a strong feature of school life. The school provides a broad range of accredited courses for the oldest pupils. As they move through the school they are provided with good, varied opportunities to attend local colleges and participate in relevant work experience placements. Pupils' personal and social development, particularly their economic well-being, benefit from these experiences.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

A commitment to care and pastoral support is at the heart of the school's good work. There are secure child protection and safeguarding procedures with proper attention paid to health and safety issues. Pupils say that they feel safe, secure and happy here. There are good links with other professionals and services, such as the school Nurse, who is based on site. Rewards,

especially stickers, are used very well to motivate and encourage pupils to work hard. Pupils have responded well to being involved in reviewing their learning and behaviour targets at the end of lessons. This has become an important process in helping them to understand how well they are doing and where they need to improve. However learning objectives set at the beginning of lessons are not always reviewed with pupils in all lessons. Good support is provided by a therapist to ensure pupils make at least satisfactory progress in communication.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

Leadership and management are satisfactory. The headteacher provides good leadership and has established a clear direction for improvement with staff and governors. She has effectively observed lessons to evaluate the quality of teaching and identified strengths and areas for improvement. Moreover, she has also effectively managed a very difficult staffing situation in order to rapidly improve teaching by establishing a core of good teaching in the school. As a result there has been good improvement in the quality of teaching and the subsequent progress pupils now make in lessons. The headteacher is supported soundly by senior and middle managers. The headteacher, with support from the deputy headteacher makes good use of whole school data about pupils' progress to identify areas for improvement. However, middle managers are not yet involved in monitoring the work of the school. The chair of governors, who has a very clear idea of the school's strengths and areas for development, provides good support for the headteacher and staff. Although other governors have recently begun to visit the school their role is not yet fully developed. As a result the school has a satisfactory rather than good (as the school's evaluation suggests) capacity to improve.

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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>	School Overall
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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?	3
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	2
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	3
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	3
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes

Achievement and standards

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

Personal development and well-being

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

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the 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

¹ 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

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 performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets	3
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	3
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

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

16 July 2007

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Woodlands School, Nottingham. NG8 3EZ

We enjoyed visiting your school and seeing how well you are doing. Thank you for telling us all about your school. This is what we found out about it.

You are receiving a satisfactory education and your school is continuing to improve. All staff really care for you and ensure you stay safe. Your behaviour is good and most of you are now attending regularly. You are making satisfactory progress and some of you are making good progress in your learning. This is because teaching is getting better and better and many of your lessons are good.

Mrs Davies manages your school well and all the staff and governors want to make your school even better. I have asked them to make sure that:

- pupils who find learning very hard get more help
- teachers let you use the interactive whiteboards to help you learn more in lessons
- some subjects are planned better
- middle managers and governors check how well you are doing so they can help to make your school even better.

Keep doing your best.

Yours sincerely

Declan McCarthy

(Lead inspector)