

# Woodfield School

## Inspection report

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	117682
<b>Local Authority</b>	HERTFORDSHIRE LA
<b>Inspection number</b>	312672
<b>Inspection dates</b>	30–31 January 2008
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	Margaret Goodchild

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 special
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	3–19
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number on roll</b>	
School	74
6th form	18
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Mr John Farrer
<b>Headteacher</b>	Mrs Rosemary Freestone
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	7 July 2003
<b>School address</b>	Malmes Croft Leverstock Green Hemel Hempstead Hertfordshire HP3 8RL
<b>Telephone number</b>	01442 253476
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## Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

## Description of the school

The school serves the needs of pupils with severe learning difficulties; many also have additional needs such as autistic spectrum disorders, physical impairment or multi-sensory impairment. Increasing numbers of pupils with complex needs are being admitted to the lower school. Several pupils also present challenging behaviour. Pupils come from varied social backgrounds. Most come from White British backgrounds but the school has a small number of pupils who are learning English as an additional language. There are almost twice as many boys as girls in the school. The school has gained the Hertfordshire Careers Education and Guidance Quality Award, the Information and Communication Technology Mark, Active Mark and has Investors in People status. The previous headteacher left at Easter 2006 when a new headteacher took up post.

## Key for inspection grades

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

## Overall effectiveness of the school

### Grade: 2

The headteacher and senior leaders are accurate in judging that this is a good school. Most of the parents who expressed their views about the school said that they are very pleased with its work. They describe it as a 'calm, warm and welcoming school' with 'committed and approachable staff'.

Through close collaboration with a range of therapists and other agencies, the school provides good care, guidance and support for its pupils. It manages pupils with autistic spectrum disorders very well and makes outstanding use of 'social stories' to bring about an improvement in pupils' behaviour and attitudes. Pupils make good progress in their personal development and behaviour is good. Most pupils enjoy school and are happy and confident. The school places a high priority on ensuring that pupils stay safe, choose healthy options and take part in regular exercise. As pupils move through the school, they become self-confident, develop increasing independence and respond well to opportunities to take responsibility. By the end of their time in post-16 education, students are prepared well for the future.

The extent of pupils' learning difficulties and/or disabilities means that standards are well below the national average but achievement is good overall. Pupils make satisfactory progress in the Foundation Stage, good progress at Key Stages 1 to 4 and outstanding progress at post-16. The quality of teaching, though good overall, ranges from satisfactory to outstanding. In some lessons, teachers are very clear about what they want pupils to learn and they ensure that a variety of stimulating activities and resources brings learning to life. In other lessons, teachers manage pupils' behaviour very well and promote their personal development effectively, but they do not always match tasks and approaches sufficiently to the needs of the most or least able pupils. The curriculum is satisfactory. It is good at Key Stages 1 to 4 and outstanding at post-16. In contrast, it does not meet the full range of children's learning needs in the Foundation Stage: there are insufficient opportunities for children to learn through play and exploration, and planning pays too little regard to national guidance for the education of this age group.

The school is led and managed well overall. It has made good improvement since the last inspection and is well placed to improve further. Senior leaders have a very good understanding of what needs to be done to improve the school and they are thorough in checking its effectiveness. Subject leadership is good in English and mathematics, although subject leaders in other areas do not yet all have the necessary skills to drive improvement forward. Governors are supportive of the school's work but do not gather enough information for themselves with which to challenge senior leaders.

## Effectiveness of the sixth form

### Grade: 1

Students at post-16 achieve exceptionally well in response to teaching that is consistently at least good and frequently outstanding. The staff are highly experienced in working with students with severe learning difficulties and they work as an enthusiastic team with a strong, shared sense of purpose. As a result, students learn in an atmosphere that is both vibrant and highly supportive. The range of accredited courses and the opportunities to attend college for part of the time meet students' individual needs very well and build successfully on their experience lower down the school. Careers guidance is a major strength. There are very good opportunities

to learn directly through work experience in local shops and businesses and around the school. The Young Enterprise Scheme makes an outstanding contribution to students' development and provides a very real context for learning a range of skills. Students are confident, well motivated, and acquire a wide range of skills in preparation for the future. They relate very well with the staff and with one another, working in teams, developing independence and life skills and taking initiative. The provision is led and managed exceptionally well.

## **Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage**

### **Grade: 3**

Provision in the Foundation Stage is satisfactory although there are some evident weaknesses in the curriculum. Children make satisfactory progress in response to teaching that is satisfactory overall and they benefit from the high level of support provided by teaching assistants and therapists. They make satisfactory gains in communication, in social skills and in developing the underlying knowledge required for counting and recognising shapes. More able children have some good opportunities to make marks, for instance, through use of the interactive whiteboard, and enjoy looking at books. Parents contribute to the assessment of their children when they join the school and there are satisfactory procedures for recording children's progress. The resources and activities provided for the small number of children under the age of five within the mixed-age classroom do not reflect national guidance for this age group or promote development sufficiently in all areas of learning.

### **What the school should do to improve further**

- Develop provision in the Foundation Stage by broadening curriculum opportunities, improving the quality of teaching and making greater use of national guidance for the Early Years Foundation Stage.
- In the school as a whole, increase the amount of teaching that is at least good by ensuring that teachers consistently match approaches and tasks closely to the next steps in the learning of individual pupils.
- Develop the skills of subject leaders and increase the involvement of governors in checking the school's effectiveness.

## **Achievement and standards**

### **Grade: 2**

#### **Grade for sixth form: 1**

Pupils make good progress towards the targets in the individual education plans, in developing communication skills, independence skills and in personal, social and health education. Their progress is good overall in literacy and mathematics, although the school has rightly identified the need to increase the amount of recording pupils do by making greater use of information and communication technology. There is no significant difference in the achievement of girls and boys. There are some examples of more able pupils making good progress and a recent initiative has been successful in raising their achievement in reading, but they are not always challenged as much as they should be. By the end of Key Stage 4, all pupils gain accreditation in the Award Scheme Development and Accreditation Network (ASDAN) Transition Challenge. Students at post-16 are successful in ASDAN Towards Independence, Bronze Youth Award or ASDAN Life Skills courses and they gain many valuable skills through work experience and the Young Enterprise Scheme. Students all go on to further education when they leave.

## Personal development and well-being

**Grade: 2**

**Grade for sixth form: 1**

Personal development, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, is good in the school as a whole and outstanding at post-16. Personal, social and emotional development is satisfactory in the Foundation Stage. Attendance is good. Pupils develop a very good understanding of the importance of healthy living and older pupils know, for example, that it is right for the tuck shop to sell only healthy snacks. Pupils take part in a wide range of physical activities and benefit from involvement in a sports partnership project with other local schools. Pupils make a good contribution to the community and raise money for others. Through the work of the school council, they help to organise the mini-enterprise programme as well as providing ideas about how the school might be improved. Older pupils run the tuck shop and a football club, and readily help the younger ones. Students at post-16 gain a range of skills, including learning to travel on their own, which prepares them well for the future.

## Quality of provision

### Teaching and learning

**Grade: 2**

**Grade for sixth form: 1**

Throughout the school, staff are very skilled in managing challenging behaviour and, therefore, in minimising disruption to learning. Pupils with autistic spectrum disorders do well and the effective management of their difficulties enables them to concentrate on learning. Teachers make good use of interactive whiteboards and use their teaching assistants effectively in supporting pupils' learning. Teaching is good and sometimes outstanding where these features are combined with imaginative use of resources and a close match of tasks and approaches to the needs of individual pupils. However, some teachers are less skilled in adapting the schemes of work, which set out what is to be learned over a period of time, to the needs of individual pupils in their class. Topics are not, therefore, always adapted as well as they could be for pupils with the most complex difficulties or consistently challenging enough for the most able. Assessment is good. The school collects a wealth of information about how well pupils are doing and teachers have had good opportunities to increase the accuracy with which they assess pupils' attainment. Their use of assessment information in planning lessons is satisfactory and developing.

### Curriculum and other activities

**Grade: 3**

**Grade for sixth form: 1**

In many ways, the school provides pupils with a range of learning opportunities matched well to their needs and aspirations and outstanding provision at post-16 ensures that students are well prepared for taking their place as fully as possible in society. The school has good links with mainstream schools and colleges that have a positive effect on pupils' self-esteem and awareness of others. Good links with businesses extend opportunities open to older pupils in particular. There are very good opportunities for accreditation so that courses at Key Stage 4 and post-16 provide for clear development of skills and meet pupils' varying needs. The strong

emphasis on personal, social and health education makes a significant contribution to pupils' personal development and well-being, and a good range of enrichment activities adds to pupils' enjoyment of school. The curriculum is only satisfactory, however, because it does not meet the needs of children in the Foundation Stage sufficiently. Senior leaders have, rightly, also identified the need to change the way topics are planned to provide teachers with a better framework from which to match activities to pupils' individual needs within lessons.

## **Care, guidance and support**

**Grade: 2**

**Grade for sixth form: 1**

Robust systems ensure that pupils are safe and well looked after, child protection procedures are firmly established and the school works closely with therapists and other professionals. The use of communication aids, such as switches, signing and the Picture Exchange Scheme (PECS), is effective in supporting pupils with communication difficulties. Very thorough systems are in place for monitoring behaviour and minimising incidents of challenging behaviour.

Comprehensive assessment and tracking systems make it easy to check how well different groups of pupils are doing. The school is working to find ways to develop an awareness in pupils of how much progress they are making. At present, variations in the quality of teaching mean that more able pupils do not always receive as much guidance as they could about how to fulfil their potential. Parents are kept well informed about how their children are doing and the school has provided a number of information sessions for parents.

## **Leadership and management**

**Grade: 2**

**Grade for sixth form: 1**

The headteacher has a clear vision and senior leaders work well together. They know the school's strengths and weaknesses because they undertake detailed monitoring. Findings are generally used well to bring about improvement and a wealth of data informs judgements about school effectiveness and target setting. The school has, rightly, identified the need to develop the skills of subject leaders in lesson observation and data analysis. They receive appropriate time to monitor their subjects and detailed interviews with senior leaders have begun to focus their work. There are good opportunities for staff to undertake training and the school provides support to other schools in the management of pupils with autistic spectrum disorders. The school has had difficulties in attracting governors and has two vacancies at present as well as some quite newly appointed governors. A small number of governors visit the school regularly but the critical friend aspect of governors' role is underdeveloped.

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## Annex A

## Inspection judgements

Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate	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?	2	1
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes	Yes
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	2	2
The effectiveness of the Foundation Stage	3	
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	2	2

### Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	2	1
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	1
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	2	

### Personal development and well-being

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	2	1
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2	
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	1	
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2	
How well learners enjoy their education	2	
The attendance of learners	2	
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 the learners' needs?	2	1
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	3	1
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	2	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	1
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	2	
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	2	2
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	2	
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	2	
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	3	
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

1 February 2008

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Woodfield School, Hemel Hempstead, HP3 8RL

Thank you for making us welcome when we visited your school. We found the visit interesting and particularly enjoyed talking to some of you and hearing about the things you are doing. I am writing now to tell you what we found out about the school.

Woodfield is a good school. Some of your parents wrote to say how much you enjoy school and we could see that you get on well together. The teachers, teaching assistants and therapists look after you well and they are very good at helping those of you whose behaviour is sometimes difficult. This helps you to stay calm so that you can get on with your work. Most of you are making good progress, especially in communication and personal, social and health education. Those of you in the older classes are becoming more independent and learning important skills that will help you later in life. The best part of the school is at post-16, where you have very good opportunities to learn through the different courses, like ASDAN, going to college and work experience. I really enjoyed seeing the lovely things you have been making in the Young Enterprise Scheme and I am sure a lot of people would want to buy the key rings you have made.

The headteacher and other staff want to make the school better for you and we have asked them to do this by making sure that:

- Those of you who are not yet five have more interesting things to do and more opportunities to learn through play.
- All the teachers give you things to do in lessons that are exactly right for you, so that they are not too easy and not too difficult.
- Teachers who are leading subjects all know exactly how to do the job really well.
- Governors find out more about the school for themselves.

With best wishes

Ms M J Goodchild

(Lead inspector)