

Woodlands School

The Woodlands Centre, Tilley Green, Shrewsbury, SY4 5PJ

Inspection dates 29–30 April 2015

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Requires improvement	3
	This inspection:	Good	2
Leadership and management		Good	2
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Good	2
Quality of teaching		Good	2
Achievement of pupils		Good	2

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school.

- Woodlands School has made good improvements in all areas of its work since the last inspection.
- Pupils' progress has started to accelerate rapidly due to the higher expectations of staff and a sharper focus on learning. The use of subject-specific teaching assistants in classes has further contributed to pupils' improved progress.
- Teaching is consistently good. Staff provide very effective support for pupils so that they can access learning. They encourage pupils to develop their academic and personal self-confidence well.
- Pupils' behaviour in and around school is good. The school is a calm and orderly environment. Many pupils arrive with a history of troubled behaviour and poor attendance, but over time they make good improvement in both areas.
- Senior leaders and governors have set the school on a clear path of improvement. Initiatives are gathering pace and having a positive impact on pupils' achievements, behaviour and improved teaching.
- Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is promoted strongly, supporting their good personal development and providing a rich variety of experiences, which pupils enjoy.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Some teachers are not always clear enough about what they want each pupil to learn. Some pupils are not stretched enough through skilful questioning.
- Teachers do not have enough opportunities to share best practice throughout the school.
- Pupils have limited vocational experiences or awards.
- Despite substantial improvements, pupils' attendance is low and this slows the rate of progress of those poor attendees.
- Fixed-term exclusions are high as a result of leaders' insistence on the highest standards of behaviour.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors visited nine lessons or part lessons, taught by nine different teachers. Nearly all of these lessons were observed jointly with a member of the senior leadership team.
- Inspectors examined pupils' work across the school. They also listened to pupils read and looked at their reading records.
- Meetings were held with the headteacher and middle leaders.
- A discussion was held with members of the governing body.
- Informal discussions were held with pupils. In addition, a meeting was held with a local authority representative.
- Inspectors reviewed documentation including those relating to pupils' academic and social progress, school self-evaluation, the school development plan and safeguarding policies.
- There were insufficient parent responses to the online questionnaire, Parent View. Inspectors looked at 20 Ofsted questionnaires returned by staff.

Inspection team

Frank Price, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Kate Robertson

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- Woodlands School caters for students with social, emotional and mental health difficulties.
- All students have a statement of special educational needs and are referred by several different local authorities. Some students have additional needs, mainly specific learning difficulties.
- A well-above average proportion of students are supported through the pupil premium. This is additional government funding for students known to be eligible for free school meals or who are looked after by their local authority.
- Almost all students are of White British heritage. A small proportion of students are looked after by their local authority.
- The school provides outreach work for the local authority, supporting mainstream schools in managing pupils with learning and behaviour difficulties, and for those with autism.
- A new primary site opened in January 2015 in Oswestry. At the time of the inspection, this had six pupils attending. The school has not had access to the primary school physical education and sport funding due to recent development of this provision.
- The school uses a small number of alternative providers. These are Walford and North Shropshire College for vehicle maintenance, small animal care and childcare courses. Lower Bush Farm is used for land-based courses.
- The school runs a breakfast club.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve teaching so that it becomes outstanding by:
 - ensuring that all teachers identify clearly what each pupil is to learn in lessons
 - using questioning more effectively to extend and probe pupils' thinking
 - providing more opportunities for staff to observe each other teach and share good practice more widely throughout the school.
- Improve pupils' achievement through increasing the range of vocational experiences and awards that pupils can achieve.
- Reduce the level of fixed-term exclusions and improve pupils' attendance so that it more closely matches national averages by identifying more ways to work, including with other agencies, to support pupils back into school.

Inspection judgements

The leadership and management are good

- Senior leaders, including the governing body, work well together in securing good improvements to the school. They create a culture in which pupils have higher aspirations of academic achievement and behaviour through good teaching.
- Middle leaders have a clearer view than previously of teaching and learning across their areas of responsibility. They contribute effectively to school improvement through effective action plans to develop further their aspects.
- The outreach service is well led and managed, and is highly regarded by schools. It is effective in providing training and support for schools with pupils who have learning and behaviour difficulties, and for pupils with autism. The service helps to prevent exclusions in other schools.
- Leaders check teachers' work closely. This has led to higher standards of academic work and contributes to teaching being consistently good across the school. Under performance has been addressed and salary progression is in relation to the quality of teaching. However, opportunities for teachers to observe and share each other's good practice are limited.
- Leaders spend the pupil premium funding effectively to speed up pupils' progress, particularly in literacy through funding daily reading sessions. Similarly, additional funding for Year 7 pupils is successfully focused on improving basic skills for these pupils.
- The range of subjects and experiences offered to pupils is good and is effective in meeting their needs. More higher-level qualifications are being offered and these are starting to have a positive impact on pupils' attainment. The school grounds provide interesting and alternative forms of learning, such as beekeeping and small animal husbandry.
- The school actively promotes British values so that pupils are prepared well for life in modern Britain. Pupils learn to appreciate their own and diverse cultures. For example, pupils have worked with a nearby British Army centre in a catering project, which they enjoyed immensely.
- Leaders promote equality of opportunity well. Stereotypes, particularly of gender, are challenged so that pupils develop more tolerant attitudes to diverse lifestyles, cultures and beliefs. Leaders' rigorous tracking of individual pupils ensures that none is disadvantaged and all achieve according to their ability.
- Pupils receive regular careers advice and guidance. Pupils are prepared well for their next stage of life through work-based and college placements, which are tailored to individual needs and interest. They receive good support to help them with the interview process for colleges and attending taster days.
- The school makes use of a small number of alternative providers. Leaders check pupils' progress, attendance, behaviour and safety effectively. These placements are successful because they are carefully set up to meet the individual needs of pupils well.
- The local authority provides a high level of support and challenge, recognising that the school has needed additional help to improve. Support for improving teaching has been effective.
- Safeguarding arrangements are thorough; pupils feel safe and are protected well. All statutory requirements are met.

■ The governance of the school:

- Following an external review of governance, recommended at the last inspection, the governing body now discharges its responsibilities much more effectively. Governors have a clearer understanding of the strengths and areas for improvement of the school, and the role they play in this. Through visits they have more detailed knowledge of teaching, pupils' progress and behaviour. They have played their part in securing overall improvements in the school.
- Governors understand assessment information, ask pertinent questions in relation to the progress of groups of pupils, and provide a good level of challenge. They hold the school to account well. They know the importance of raising pupils' attendance is a key focus for further improvement.
- Governors have been involved in the appointment of new staff; this has improved the quality of teaching. Weaknesses in teaching have been tackled and governors have ensured that salary progression is contingent upon good teaching.
- Governors are rightly confident that there has been a cultural change in the ethos of the school, so that the focus on learning and progress is paramount. They ensure that British values are promoted through aspects of the curriculum well.
- Governors receive regular training and all are trained in safeguarding, as well as the designated governor. Governors have a good overview of the budget to make sure that the school has a balanced budget and that it is efficiently used.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good. They develop positive attitudes to learning over time, overcoming previous negative experiences. This is reflected in calm lessons where behaviour does not disrupt learning. Behaviour around the school is equally good.
- Pupils' positive attitudes to learning are reflected in their work. They take care in presenting their work and workbooks are of a good standard. Pupils enjoy attending college and land-based courses. They have positive attitudes and develop their maturity well.
- Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is promoted well. The school has 'collapsed timetable' weeks when these aspects are explored in more depth through visitors to school or a focus on different cultures, such as an Italian week. These opportunities encourage British values and increase pupils' appreciation of their own and other cultures.
- Pupils enjoy working for reward points, which they can spend online; they find this motivational and their behaviour improves well over time.
- Pupils' attendance rates are well below the national average. A small number of persistent poor attendees adversely affects the headline rate. However, through a stronger focus on following up non-attendance, including providing both support to parents and challenge where necessary, the attendance for the majority of pupils has improved significantly. Unexplained absences are followed up quickly and the school implements a range of ways to encourage better attendance, such as through the breakfast club. However, leaders recognise that further improvement is required.
- As expectations of better behaviour have risen, a temporary consequence has been higher levels of fixed-term exclusions. The school is exploring ways of reducing these levels rapidly without compromising the standard of behaviour.

Safety

- The school's work to keep pupils safe and secure is good. The school undertakes extensive work in keeping pupils safe on-line through regular information and lessons on e-safety.
- Pupils spoken to said they feel safe in school and did not express any concerns about bullying. They like the mentoring system where each pupil has an assigned mentor and they are confident to approach this member of staff with any concerns. The strong supportive relationships between staff and pupils

contribute well to pupils' feeling of safety, security and stability.

- Systems to assess risk and safeguard pupils when using other alternative provision are thorough.
- Safeguarding procedures are comprehensive and kept up to date. All staff understand and follow the procedures. Visitors to school are checked in electronically and vetted to keep pupils safe.

The quality of teaching is good

- Teaching has improved well since the last inspection so that it is now consistently good throughout the school. Teachers now have higher expectations of pupils' progress and of the standard of work pupils are expected to produce. Pupils have responded well to this. Pupils' work is marked regularly and pointers given as to how they can further improve.
- The teaching of reading is systematic. Improved literacy skills underpin pupils' better understanding and access to learning in other subjects. Teachers place a strong emphasis on improving pupils' spelling and writing for a range of different purposes.
- Leaders' decision to allocate teaching assistants to specific subjects has contributed to the more rapid progress of pupils. This has brought about continuity of staff, who have good subject expertise to help pupils more effectively.
- Relationships between staff and pupils are positive and this encourages more reluctant learners to participate in lessons more readily. Pupils' successes are celebrated in order to boost their self-confidence.
- Pupils' behaviour is managed effectively so that disruptions to learning are kept to a minimum.
- Pupils enjoy practical activities. In a design and technology lesson, pupils worked well to design items of furniture from recycled wood and then produced these to a good standard. They know how to use different joints, and use power tools sensibly and with accuracy.
- Mathematics is taught well. Increasingly, pupils learn how to develop their problem-solving skills in a variety of tasks. Effective teaching has enabled pupils to achieve better and is improving GCSE results for the most-able pupils.
- Teachers do not always identify clearly what each pupil is to learn in lessons and so some pupils are not challenged as well as they might be. Pupils do not have enough opportunities to extend their thinking because teachers do not ask sufficiently probing questions.

The achievement of pupils is good

- Pupils' achievement was initially slow to improve following the last inspection. However, over the last 12 months pupils' progress has improved rapidly, so that the majority of pupils in all year groups are making expected or better than expected progress.
- Published assessment information suggests that pupils are not making the expected levels of progress. Scrutiny of pupils' workbooks and tracking data show that there is sufficient evidence to support the view that the achievement of current pupils is good and that rapid progress is being sustained.
- A factor in the improvement of pupils' progress has been teachers' increased expectations. Pupils are given more challenging targets, and teachers track their progress carefully and compare it to similar pupils nationally.

- Although the Key Stage 2 provision has only been operational for four months, early indications are that pupils are on track to achieve their predicted targets, which are suitably challenging.
- The most-able pupils are entered for early GCSE examinations, enabling them to experience success and achieve higher awards in Year 11. Given their low starting points, they achieve creditable results. Pupils are on course to do better this coming year. Pupils gain other nationally recognised qualifications in science, design and food technology.
- The concerted effort on improving pupils' literacy and reading, in particular through daily 20-minute reading sessions, has increased pupils' reading ages. This has boosted their confidence, enjoyment and appreciation of a wider range of authors and texts.
- Pupils in receipt of the pupil premium make similar progress to their peers and close the gaps in English and mathematics well. Teachers quickly identify the most important areas that need to be improved and provide an effective programme of support. There are too few pupils to report in detail on their achievements, as this would risk identifying individuals. Catch-up funding for Year 7 pupils has been used effectively to improve pupils' literacy and numeracy skills.
- While pupils have opportunities to gain some vocational qualifications, leaders have identified the need to increase the range of accredited vocational opportunities and awards in areas such as land management and construction, particularly for less-able students.
- Those pupils who attend alternative provision achieve well as the courses are carefully geared to meet their needs and interests.
- Pupils are well prepared for life after school and it is rare that any pupil is not in training, education or employment.
- Some pupils are not making the progress they are capable of because their attendance is poor.

What inspection judgements mean

School	Grade	Judgement	Description
	Grade 1	Outstanding	An outstanding school is highly effective in delivering outcomes that provide exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs. This ensures that pupils are very well equipped for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
	Grade 2	Good	A good school is effective in delivering outcomes that provide well for all its pupils' needs. Pupils are well prepared for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
	Grade 3	Requires improvement	A school that requires improvement is not yet a good school, but it is not inadequate. This school will receive a full inspection within 24 months from the date of this inspection.
	Grade 4	Inadequate	<p>A school that has serious weaknesses is inadequate overall and requires significant improvement but leadership and management are judged to be Grade 3 or better. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p> <p>A school that requires special measures is one where the school is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the school's leaders, managers or governors have not demonstrated that they have the capacity to secure the necessary improvement in the school. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p>

School details

Unique reference number	123630
Local authority	Shropshire
Inspection number	462568

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	10–16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	43
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Edwin Thorpe
Headteacher	Robin Wilson
Date of previous school inspection	12 June 2013
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