

# Inspection of Woodfield School

Malmes Croft, Leverstock Green, Hemel Hempstead, Hertfordshire HP3 8RL

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Inspection dates:	1 and 2 October 2024
The quality of education	<b>Good</b>
Behaviour and attitudes	<b>Good</b>
Personal development	<b>Good</b>
Leadership and management	<b>Good</b>
Sixth-form provision	<b>Good</b>
Previous inspection grade	Outstanding

## **What is it like to attend this school?**

Pupils are warmly welcomed to school each morning. They know the routines well, which helps them understand what will happen each day. Pupils find this reassuring and so settle well. Staff keep pupils safe; adults are always present to help them. The school prioritises developing positive relationships between staff and pupils.

All pupils are taught how to communicate their wants and needs and to express preferences. Staff ensure that most pupils learn to use a broad, ever-expanding range of symbols or words to do this. This is important because communicating with others allows pupils to explain their feelings.

Staff have high expectations for pupils' learning and behaviour. Pupils behave well. They know that adults will give them interesting learning activities, which helps them succeed.

Pupils experience visits and visitors to the school. These help pupils to learn how to stay safe in the community, for example, when shopping. The school also helps pupils to stay healthy. For example, pupils have dance lessons.

Over time, staff support pupils to be independent, for example, by tidying away equipment. This means they are ready for their next stage and learn important life skills. Pupils are happy and proud when they complete increasingly complex tasks independently.

## **What does the school do well and what does it need to do better?**

The school's curriculum consists of carefully planned pathways. These are newly developed. They map out what pupils need to know and be able to do. However, some developmental steps that pupils need to learn are quite broad. Staff create smaller tasks to help pupils achieve these broader steps. However, some staff are not as clear about what these learning steps should be. This means that, at times, pupils miss learning some important skills and knowledge.

Staff ensure pupils have plenty of suitable tasks that develop their knowledge and skills and capture their interest. Activities relate to appropriate and interesting themes, such as 'heroes', which engage pupils in their learning. However, the plans for how pupils' individual education, health and care plan (EHC plan) targets connect with the learning pathways and the themes are sometimes unclear. This can make it difficult for staff to plan appropriate learning tasks.

Pupils learn to communicate very well in ways that are appropriate for their individual needs. Most pupils have aided language boards. They vary in complexity and for different tasks. These are crucial, as they allow pupils to express preferences and their views. Pupils learn to hear and recognise different sounds through learning rhymes and songs. Younger pupils also begin to enjoy sharing and listening to books and stories. These essential foundations support pupils to begin to learn to read. The school ensures that pupils who are ready follow the school's appropriate phonics programme.

Pupils learn because teachers adapt the curriculum to meet their individual needs. They become increasingly confident learners over time. Each pupil's EHC plan sets individual targets. These targets are the basis of their personalised learning plans. The school involves parents and carers in deciding relevant targets. Teachers and teaching assistants have high expectations for all pupils. They know what pupils know and understand. They use this to build new learning on what pupils have already achieved.

Much thought and planning have gone into managing pupils' behaviour. Relationships between staff and pupils are positive and fundamental to pupils' positive behaviour. Staff have an in-depth understanding of the pupils' challenges, enabling them to support their development well.

Staff prepare pupils for life after school. Pupils develop independent life and work-ready skills. These include learning to prepare food and safe travel in the community. The school provides appropriate careers advice for pupils.

The school's personal development programme teaches pupils to keep safe in different situations. Pupils often practise and rehearse strategies to help them remember what they have learned. Pupils have various responsibilities, including choosing appropriate resources to complete tasks and tidying up. This is key to how the school builds pupils' confidence and self-esteem. Older pupils run the school café. This teaches them many skills, including social skills for everyday life.

Some parents are uncertain about whether recent positive changes will be more permanent, especially regarding staff retention. Leaders and governors have additional plans to address any concerns of parents. For example, they want to use technology to share pupils' learning experiences more often.

Staff are positive about the school. They receive effective training that helps them to feel confident in their role. They appreciate the school's consideration for their well-being and workload reduction.

## **Safeguarding**

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

## **What does the school need to do to improve?**

### **(Information for the school and appropriate authority)**

- The curriculum is under development. Although the broader learning steps have been well considered, the important steps of knowledge that pupils need to learn are not always clear. This means that in some subject areas, pupils sometimes miss some essential knowledge or move up a development step too quickly or without developing the correct skills. The school needs to ensure that, in all areas of the curriculum, the

important steps of knowledge are fully considered, precisely identified and available to all staff.

- The school has started to review the curriculum content and how it is taught. However, staff do not always understand how the targets in pupils' EHC plans align with the learning pathways and themes. As a result, on occasions, pupils do not always gain the essential knowledge and skills they need to. The school should ensure that teachers always take careful consideration of pupils' EHC plans when providing classroom learning and activities.

## How can I feed back my views?

You can use [Ofsted Parent View](#) to give Ofsted your opinion on your child's school, or to find out what other parents and carers think. We use information from Ofsted Parent View when deciding which schools to inspect, when to inspect them and as part of their inspection.

The Department for Education has further [guidance](#) on how to complain about a school.

## Further information

You can search for [published performance information](#) about the school.

In the report, '[disadvantaged pupils](#)' is used to mean pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND); pupils who meet the [definition of children in need of help and protection](#); pupils receiving statutory local authority support from a social worker; and pupils who otherwise meet the criteria used for deciding the school's [pupil premium funding](#) (this includes pupils claiming free school meals at any point in the last six years, looked after children (children in local authority care) and/or children who left care through adoption or another formal route).

## School details

<b>Unique reference number</b>	117682
<b>Local authority</b>	Hertfordshire
<b>Inspection number</b>	10323658
<b>Type of school</b>	Special
<b>School category</b>	Community special
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	3 to 19
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Gender of pupils in sixth-form provision</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	124
<b>Of which, number on roll in the sixth form</b>	20
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair of governing body</b>	Carol Kelsey
<b>Headteacher</b>	Kate Marrs-Gant
<b>Website</b>	<a href="http://www.woodfield.herts.sch.uk">www.woodfield.herts.sch.uk</a>
<b>Dates of previous inspection</b>	19 and 20 April 2023, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

## Information about this school

- This school is for pupils with profound and multiple learning difficulties, severe learning difficulties, autistic spectrum disorders and multi-sensory impairments. All pupils have an EHC plan.
- The school does not use any alternative provision.

## Information about this inspection

The inspectors carried out this graded inspection under section 5 of the Education Act 2005. During a graded inspection, we grade the school for each of our key judgements (quality of education; behaviour and attitudes; personal development; and leadership and management) and for any relevant provision judgement (early years and/or sixth form

provision). Schools receiving a graded inspection from September 2024, will not be given an overall effectiveness grade.

- Inspections are a point-in-time evaluation about the quality of a school's education provision.
- Inspectors discussed any continued impact of the pandemic with the school and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- The inspectors met with the headteacher, deputy headteacher, assistant headteacher and special educational needs coordinator. The inspectors also met with representatives from the governing body, including the chair of governors and a representative from the local authority.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: communication and language, physical development, and personal and social education. For each deep dive, inspectors held discussions about the curriculum, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers and looked at samples of pupils' work.
- To evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding, the inspectors: reviewed the single central record; took account of the views of leaders, staff and pupils; and considered the extent to which the school has created an open and positive culture around safeguarding that puts pupils' interests first.
- The inspectors considered responses to Ofsted Parent View, including free-text responses. They also considered the responses to the online staff and pupil surveys.

### **Inspection team**

Jessie Linsley, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

Fiona Webb

Ofsted Inspector

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