

Inspection of Woodlands Secondary School

Northwell Drive, Luton, Bedfordshire LU3 3SP

Inspection dates: 8 and 9 May 2024

Overall effectiveness

Outstanding

The quality of education

Outstanding

Behaviour and attitudes

Outstanding

Personal development

Outstanding

Leadership and management

Outstanding

Sixth-form provision

Outstanding

Previous inspection grade

Outstanding

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils' success is at the core of Woodlands School. It is a caring and harmonious community where all pupils flourish. All who attend the school have complex special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). However, the school's high expectations set no limits on what they can do or achieve. Pupils learn exceptionally well.

Adults build strong and trusting relationships with pupils. This helps pupils to know they are safe. Staff have a deep knowledge of every individual's needs. They provide well judged and sensitive support. This ensures that pupils know how to communicate their wishes and manage their own behaviour. Pupils delight in their friendships and are respectful of each other. Pupils behave extremely well around the school.

Pupils' voice is important at Woodlands. Their opinions are sought after and highly regarded. Pupils make significant contributions towards improving their local community. They are proud of these achievements, and rightly so. It helps them to understand how to lead active and fulfilling lives.

Pupils are exceptionally well prepared for adulthood. This thread weaves through the school's curriculum. Real-life experiences enrich pupils' learning. It equips them with the skills to live their lives as independently as possible.

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

The school has crafted a bespoke curriculum for their pupils. It caters very well for pupils' specific needs. Some pupils are at early stages of development and learning. Clear and detailed plans provide a sharp focus on their medical, communicative and sensory needs. Staff work alongside other expert professionals to provide skilled intervention and support. Other pupils study more discrete subjects. Curriculum plans are precise about the important information pupils need to know. They allow opportunities for pupils to build on prior learning by revisiting important knowledge. This prepares pupils well by equipping them with what they need for their next destinations.

Staff have strong subject knowledge. Effective use is made of pupils' education, health and care (EHC) plans so that the curriculum is well matched to pupils' individual starting points. Through targeted questioning and close observations, staff precisely identify pupils' next steps. Plans are appropriately adapted to address misconceptions, ensuring pupils have a secure understanding of what has been taught. The ambitious curriculum means that pupils achieve very well.

'Preparation for adulthood' is at the heart of the curriculum. Pupils have rich experiences to practise and apply their skills. For example, they make use of strategies they have learned to manage the school tuck shop or serve customers at the school café. This work is highly relevant to pupils' lives, so places learning in a

meaningful context. It enhances their education and builds a strong understanding about life beyond the school.

Communication and language development are high priorities. Staff make skilful use of a range of resources, such as visual clues and assisted technologies. This helps engage pupils to interact in their learning. It means pupils communicate their wishes and feelings clearly. The school's new phonics programme is now in place. When pupils are ready, they receive teaching in phonics. Well-trained staff expertly deliver the school's programme. Pupils read books to help them practise the sounds they know. These pupils are learning to read with increased confidence and accuracy.

There is a purposeful and calm atmosphere around the school. Classrooms are busy places, reflecting pupils' highly positive attitudes to their learning. They are active participants in learning and willingly contribute when asked. Most pupils attend well. Where attendance is less frequent, there are clear reasons owing to complex health needs. The school's bespoke approach in tracking attendance means they understand how best to support the needs of pupils and their families.

The highly inclusive programme to support pupils' personal development is impressive. Tailored opportunities encourage all pupils to explore different talents and interests. There is an extensive range of clubs that promote pupils' independence and self-awareness. The development of life skills threads through the curriculum, for example developing enterprise skills through preparing food for the cafe or growing plants to sell to the community. Adventurous activities such as skiing and residential visits effectively promote resilience. Students in the sixth form work towards a life skills qualification. There is a comprehensive programme that provides careers advice and guidance. Pupils are very well prepared for their next stages and progress into appropriate destinations when they leave school.

Governors are very effective in their roles. They challenge and work closely with leaders to help achieve the school's ambitious vision. Staff feel well supported and welcome the ways in which leaders review their workload. They appreciate leaders' concern for their work-life balance and emotional well-being.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

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

Unique reference number	109744
Local authority	Luton
Inspection number	10294925
Type of school	Special
School category	Community special
Age range of pupils	11 to 18
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in sixth-form provision	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	262
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	55
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governing body	Nadeem Butt
Headteacher	Sandra Clarke
Website	www.woodlands.luton.sch.uk
Dates of previous inspection	23 and 24 November 2022, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- All pupils who attend the school have an EHC plan. The school caters for pupils who have severe or profound learning difficulties. Some pupils have serious medical conditions and complex needs.
- The chair of governors took on their role in September 2023.
- The school is making use of one unregistered alternative provision.
- The school refers to the sixth form as the further education provision for post-16 students. Some students are educated in different departments, depending upon their level of need.
- The school meets the requirements of the provider access legislation, which requires schools to provide pupils in Years 8 to 13 with information and engagement about approved technical education qualifications and apprenticeships.

Information about this inspection

The inspectors carried out this graded inspection under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

- Inspections are a point-in-time judgement 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.
- Inspectors met with the headteacher, other senior leaders and teachers.
- An inspector met with three governors, including the chair of governors. The inspector met with a representative of the local authority.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in the following subjects: early reading and communication; mathematics; the personal, social, health and economic (PSHE) and life skills curriculum and physical education, which included physical development. For each deep dive, they discussed the curriculum with subject leaders, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers, spoke to some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of work.
- Inspectors also discussed the curriculum in another subject – computing.
- 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.
- Inspectors took account of the views of parents through their responses to the online survey, Ofsted Parent View and parents' free-text comments. Inspectors also considered responses to the Ofsted staff survey and the pupil survey.

Inspection team

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