

# Inspection of a good school: Wood Bank School

Dene View, Luddenden, Halifax, West Yorkshire HX2 6PB

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Inspection dates:

17 and 18 April 2024

## **Outcome**

Wood Bank School continues to be a good school.

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

All pupils who attend the school have an education, health and care plan. Pupils have a diverse, and often complex, range of needs. The school's motto, 'from strong roots we grow and blossom', is evident throughout the school. The school has developed an ambitious curriculum that meets pupils' individual needs well.

There are positive relationships between staff and pupils. Staff support pupils in a caring and calm way when they demonstrate more-challenging behaviour due to their specific needs. Pupils are confident that bullying is dealt with quickly by staff. Pupils have a trusted adult they can talk to if they are worried or concerned.

Staff are vigilant. They have a strong understanding of the additional vulnerabilities of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities. Staff report any concerns they have about pupils, no matter how small.

There are a range of activities, such as forest school, music therapy and sensory storytelling, which broaden pupils' experiences and develop their confidence and skills. The school celebrates and develops pupils' individuality.

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

The school has recently designed the curriculum into four pathways: discover, develop, engage and explore. When pupils join the school, teachers use assessment well to ensure pupils are on the right curriculum pathway.

Teachers effectively support pupils through the use of visual aids, sensory equipment and signs and symbols. Highly sensory and practical activities, which include repetition and opportunities for pupils to apply what they are learning to different contexts, are carefully planned by teachers.

In some subjects, in the more formal curriculum pathway 'explore', the school has not identified the most essential knowledge, concepts and vocabulary that pupils will learn and remember. In these subjects, some pupils are capable of doing more-demanding work.

The school has raised the profile of reading. Many pupils are at the early stages of learning to read. Pupils receive daily phonics teaching. Pupils enjoy hearing teachers read to them. The teaching of phonics is consistent. However, the books that pupils learn to read are, sometimes, not well matched to pupils' reading ability. Pupils do not have the opportunity to read these books at home. Some pupils in the more formal curriculum pathway do not receive the teaching they need to develop and enhance their reading skills further. The school intends to provide information to parents to enable them to support pupils with reading at home.

Inspectors observed many pupils engaged in learning. The school's 'sensory plans' and 'me at my best' behaviour plans provide helpful strategies for teachers. Most staff feel well supported to deal with challenging behaviour. Staff are consistent in their approach to managing pupils' behaviour. They model behaviour with a warm and nurturing approach. Routines are taught and well embedded.

The attendance of some pupils is stubbornly low. The school is not analytical and persistent enough when it comes to tackling poor attendance. Although the school does identify barriers to pupils' attendance, it does not respond to these barriers as swiftly as it should.

The school has thought carefully about the most important knowledge that pupils need to know to keep themselves safe through the wider curriculum. When pupils need more specific input, they receive individualised and tailored support. Pupils can remember some of what they have learned in the wider curriculum, such as the importance of brushing their teeth thoroughly and how to cross the road carefully. Leaders plan to include a wider range of religious festivals to develop pupils' understanding of other faiths and cultures.

Governors provide effective challenge and support to leaders. They use reports and information from external partners to check what leaders are telling them. They know the school's context well.

Most staff feel well supported by leaders. Recent changes to the school's assessment systems have helped to reduce the workload of staff. The school's 'people strategy' has a strong focus on staff well-being and the development of staff's skills and expertise.

The school's comprehensive early career teacher programme ensures that teachers receive bespoke training in teaching pupils with complex needs.

## **Safeguarding**

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

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

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

- Sometimes, the books that pupils learn to read are not consistently well matched to their reading ability. This means that some pupils are not making as much progress as they should. The school should ensure that all books are well matched to pupils' reading ability and pupils have the opportunity to read these books at home to practise reading and build up their fluency. The school should also ensure that there is a reading strategy beyond phonics to ensure pupils develop their reading skills further when they are ready.
- In a small number of subjects in the formal curriculum, the school has not considered well enough the most essential knowledge that pupils need to know. This means that, on occasions, some activities are not demanding enough for some pupils. The school should ensure that the most important knowledge in these subjects is identified and activities are well matched to what pupils know and can do.
- Some pupils do not attend as well as they need to. This means they are missing crucial learning and falling further behind. The school should ensure that barriers to pupils' attendance are addressed swiftly and the profile of attendance is raised further across the school.

## Background

When we have judged a school to be good, we will then normally go into the school about once every four years to confirm that the school remains good. This is called an ungraded inspection, and it is carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. We do not give graded judgements on an ungraded inspection. However, if we find evidence that a school would now receive a higher or lower grade, then the next inspection will be a graded inspection, which is carried out under section 5 of the Act. Usually this is within one to two years of the date of the ungraded inspection. If we have serious concerns about safeguarding, behaviour or the quality of education, we will deem the ungraded inspection a graded inspection immediately.

This is the second ungraded inspection since we judged the school to be good in February 2014.

## 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>	107590
<b>Local authority</b>	Calderdale
<b>Inspection number</b>	10297216
<b>Type of school</b>	Special
<b>School category</b>	Community special
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	4 to 11
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	121
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair of governing body</b>	Nick Wigmore
<b>Headteacher</b>	Jenna Port
<b>Website</b>	<a href="http://www.woodbank.calderdale.sch.uk/">www.woodbank.calderdale.sch.uk/</a>
<b>Date of previous inspection</b>	24 October 2018, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

## Information about this school

- All pupils have an education, health and care plan.
- The school caters for pupils with specific learning difficulties, visual impairment, hearing impairment, autistic spectrum disorder, social, emotional and mental health needs, physical disabilities and severe and profound learning difficulties.
- The number of staff and pupils has increased significantly since the school's previous inspection.
- The proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals is above the national average.
- The school does not use any alternative education provision.
- A new headteacher has been appointed since the previous inspection.
- The school has appointed a director of people since the previous inspection.
- The school rents a classroom at Luddenden Church of England School, which is situated next to the school.

## Information about this inspection

- Inspections are a point-in-time judgement about the quality of a school's education provision.
- This was the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. Inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with the school and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- Inspectors held discussions with staff, the headteacher, the deputy headteacher, the director of people, early career teachers and other senior leaders.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in reading, mathematics and personal, social, health and economic education. For each deep dive, inspectors held discussions about the curriculum, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers, spoke to some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work.
- The lead inspector also discussed the curriculum in some other subjects.
- To evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding, 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 lead inspector held a telephone conversation with the local authority designated officer and the local authority representative for the school.
- Inspectors visited the classroom that the school rents at another school.
- The lead inspector talked to some parents when they were collecting their children at the end of the school day.
- The lead inspector met with three members of the school's governing body, including the chair and vice-chair.
- Inspectors considered the views of staff who responded to Ofsted's staff survey. Inspectors also considered the views of parents and carers who responded to Ofsted Parent View.

## Inspection team

Michele Costello, lead inspector

Ofsted Inspector

Angela Spencer-Brooke

Ofsted Inspector

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Piccadilly Gate  
Store Street  
Manchester  
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