



Report summary for parents and carers on Western Learning Federation Woodlands High School

Date of inspection: November 2022

by Estyn, His Majesty's Inspectorate for Education and Training in Wales

Overview

Woodlands High School is one of three special schools that form the Western Learning Federation. The federation was established in January 2018. The aim of the federation is to achieve economies of scale, develop close collaborative working across the schools for the benefit of both pupils and staff, and develop and improve leadership capacity, whilst maintaining the individual identity of each of the three schools. All three schools are served by one governing body and led by an executive headteacher, who was appointed in 2019.

Since the last inspection the school has continued with its improvement journey and is run by highly capable and effective leaders who are motivated in providing the best possible learning experiences for all pupils. The school continues to be affected by staffing shortages but manages these difficulties to the best of its ability. The school has a strong culture of support for pupils and provides particularly effective formal and informal well-being support for all staff.

Overall, Woodlands is very caring and nurturing school. Pupils develop their social skills very well and enjoy happy and respectful relationships with other pupils and staff. Staff understand and respond to the needs of pupils well. Nearly all pupils make suitable progress that is in line with their needs and ability. Staff have consistently high expectations of pupils' attitudes to learning and behaviour. Where teaching is most effective, staff are enthusiastic and plan well for the individual needs of pupils.

The school has developed a creative enquiry curriculum and pupils are engaged in curriculum planning. The school also supports pupils' understanding of different cultures and traditions well and provides beneficial opportunities for pupils to experience these. Pupils are provided with valuable opportunities to learn in the local community, for example through worthwhile opportunities to undertake work experience and intern placements with businesses.

These provide pupils with exciting opportunities to learn more about the world of work but more importantly pupils are valued by the host organisations for their dedication and commitment. This contributes very positively to pupils' self-esteem.

Overall, pupils at Woodlands are polite, pleasant and respectful of themselves and others.



Recommendations

- R1 Continue to develop pupils' skills, particularly in reading and Welsh**
- R2 Strengthen tracking systems that clearly show pupils' progress over time**
- R3 Evaluate the impact of the Western Learning Federation on Woodlands High School**

What happens next

The school will draw up an action plan to address the recommendations from the inspection.

Estyn will invite the school to prepare two case studies on its work in relation to: 1 supporting pupils' attitudes to learning and the sharing of curriculum and learning experiences through dissemination events; and 2 developing a culture that supports staff well-being, for dissemination on Estyn's website.

School context

Name of provider	Western Learning Federation Woodlands High School
Local authority	Cardiff Council
Language of the provider	English
Type of school	Special
Number of pupils on roll	141
Pupils of statutory school age	89
Percentage of pupils eligible for free school meals over a three-year average (The national percentage of pupils eligible for free school meals over a three-year average in maintained special schools is 44.7%)	62.5%
Percentage of pupils identified as having additional learning needs (a) (The national percentage of pupils identified as having an additional learning need in maintained special schools is 100%)	100.0%
Date of headteacher appointment	09/01/2019
Start date of inspection	21/11/2022
<p>Woodlands High School provides day education for pupils from 11 to 19 years old. The majority of pupils are of statutory school age and around 40% are in post compulsory education. The additional learning needs of pupils are varied, and all pupils have a statement of special educational need. Approximately 44% of pupils have severe learning difficulties, a further fifth have physical and medical needs speech and a further fifth have communication and language difficulties. A few pupils are autistic or have a general learning difficulty. A very few pupils have sensory impairments and profound and multiple learning difficulties. Overall, the needs of pupils are generally more complex than when the school was last inspected.</p> <p>There are 15 classes at the school, and 21 full time equivalent teachers and 24 teaching assistants. Classes are organised by ability level ranging from progression step one to progression step three.</p> <p>The school has been working with a local university to provide placements for PGCE students.</p> <p>The school was last inspected in 2016 and placed in special measures. It was removed from this category in 2018. The head of school was appointed in January 2019 but was appointed as acting headteacher following the inspection in 2016.</p> <p>Woodlands High School is due to move to new purpose build accommodation on the Fairwater education campus in 2026.</p>	

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