



ISI Independent
Schools
Inspectorate

EDUCATIONAL QUALITY INSPECTION

WOODLANDS SCHOOL AT HUTTON MANOR

JUNE 2017



CONTENTS

| | |
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| SCHOOL'S DETAILS | 1 |
| PREFACE | 2 |
| INSPECTION EVIDENCE | 3 |
| 1. BACKGROUND INFORMATION | 4 |
| About the school | 4 |
| What the school seeks to do | 4 |
| About the pupils | 4 |
| 2. KEY FINDINGS | 5 |
| Recommendation(s) | 5 |
| 3. THE QUALITY OF PUPILS' ACADEMIC AND OTHER ACHIEVEMENTS | 6 |
| 4. THE QUALITY OF THE PUPILS' PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT | 9 |

SCHOOL'S DETAILS

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|---------------------------------|---|-----|----------------|-----|
| School | Woodlands School at Hutton Manor | | | |
| DfE Number | 881/6047 | | | |
| EYFS Number | 336851 | | | |
| Address | 428 Rayleigh Road Hutton Brentwood Essex CM13 1SD | | | |
| Telephone number | 01277 220364 | | | |
| Email address | info@woodlandsschools.co.uk | | | |
| Headteacher | Mrs Paula Hobbs | | | |
| Proprietor | Mr Ken Lewis | | | |
| Age range | 3 months to 11 | | | |
| Number of pupils on roll | 226 | | | |
| | Boys | 126 | Girls | 100 |
| | EYFS | 129 | | |
| | Infants | 39 | Juniors | 58 |
| Inspection dates | 21 to 22 June 2017 | | | |

PREFACE

The registration authority for independent schools is the Department for Education (DfE), which directs inspection according to a specified frequency or at any time where the DfE has particular concerns about a school. The Independent Schools Inspectorate (ISI) is the body approved by the Secretary of State for the purpose of inspecting schools which are, or whose heads are, in membership of the associations which form the Independent Schools Council (ISC) and reporting on the extent to which they meet the Independent School Standards ('the standards') in the Schedule to the Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014.

All association independent schools will have an inspection within three years from April 2016, in accordance with the Framework and DfE requirements. The inspection may be of COMPLIANCE ONLY or a combined inspection of EDUCATIONAL QUALITY AND COMPLIANCE depending on a number of factors, including findings from their most recent inspection. Schools judged not to meet the standards following their inspection may also be subject to a progress monitoring visit before their next routine inspection. The progress monitoring visit will judge whether the school has taken the necessary action to meet any un-met standards identified at their previous inspection.

Inspections do not include matters that are outside of the regulatory framework described above, such as: an exhaustive health and safety audit; compliance with data protection requirements; an in-depth examination of the structural condition of the school, its services or other physical features; contractual arrangements with parents; an investigation of the financial viability of the school or its accounting procedures.

The inspection was also carried out under the arrangements of the ISC Associations for the maintenance and improvement of the quality of their membership.

This is an EDUCATIONAL QUALITY inspection, reporting on the quality of the school's work. It focuses on the two key outcomes:

- The achievement of the pupils, including their academic development, and
- The personal development of the pupils.

Since the school was last inspected, the framework for inspection has changed. The current inspection framework uses different criteria and arrangements for grading from those used in previous inspection frameworks. The judgements made on this inspection are, therefore, not directly comparable to judgements made on previous inspections.

Inspectors may be aware of individual safeguarding concerns, allegations and complaints as part of the inspection process. Such matters will not usually be referred to specifically in the published report but will have been considered by the team in reaching its judgements.

All inspections of independent schools in England are conducted according to the requirements of the Independent School Standards Regulations. However, different inspectorates apply different frameworks that are suited to the different types of schools they inspect. The ISI terminology reflects quality judgements that are at least equivalent to those used by the national inspectorate, Ofsted. ISI reports do not provide a single overarching judgement for the school but instead give a clear judgement about key outcomes for pupils and information on the quality of the school's work.

The headline judgements must include one of the ISI descriptors 'excellent', 'good', 'sound' or 'unsatisfactory'.

INSPECTION EVIDENCE

The inspectors observed lessons, conducted formal interviews with pupils and examined samples of pupils' work. They held discussions with members of staff and with the proprietor, observed a sample of the extra-curricular activities that occurred during the inspection period, and attended an assembly. Inspectors visited the facilities for the youngest pupils, together with the learning support and educational resource areas. The responses of parents and pupils to pre-inspection questionnaires were analysed, and the inspectors examined curriculum and other documentation made available by the school.

Inspectors

| | |
|----------------------|--|
| Mrs Karen Williams | Reporting inspector |
| Dr David Livingstone | Team inspector (Former headmaster, IAPS school) |
| Mr Ian Sterling | Team inspector (Head of prep school, ISA school) |
| Mrs Gill Bilbo | Co-ordinating inspector for EYFS |

1. BACKGROUND INFORMATION

About the school

- 1.1 Woodlands School at Hutton Manor is a co-educational school for pupils from the ages of three months to eleven years. The school and nursery are overseen by the proprietor, who is advised by a board of directors and who maintains regular contact with the head. Situated on a 30-acre site, the school was founded in 2001, and the nursery, Little Acorns, added in 2010. Close links are maintained with a nearby sister school, including the sharing of good practice and policies.
- 1.2 Children enter the nursery from the age of three months. At the age of three years they transfer to the main school or may continue in the nursery. The school is divided into three sections: foundation stage for children aged three to five years, infants for those aged five to seven years, and juniors for those aged seven to eleven years.

What the school seeks to do

- 1.3 The school seeks to combine the best of traditional approaches with progressive ideas. It aims to foster curiosity, independence and a love of learning in a safe and happy environment, where pupils can grow into responsible citizens and life-long learners.

About the pupils

- 1.4 Pupils come from local professional families and a range of cultural backgrounds. Nationally standardised test data provided by the school indicate that the ability of the pupils on entry to Reception is broadly above average. The school has identified 24 pupils as having special education needs (SEN), of whom 19 receive additional support. No pupil has a statement of special needs of education, health and care plan. English is an additional language (EAL) for three pupils, one of whom requires additional support. The school has identified 16 pupils as being more able and talented, their needs being met through extension tasks in class, enrichment opportunities and sponsorship of additional activities.
- 1.5 National Curriculum nomenclature is used throughout this report to refer to year groups in the school. Where the school's own names differ from those used nationally, the details are given in the table below:

| <i>School name</i> | <i>National Curriculum name</i> |
|--------------------|------------------------------------|
| Puddleducks | Nursery (ages 6 months to 2 years) |
| Tiggywinkles | Nursery (ages 6 months to 2 years) |
| Squirrel Nutkin | Nursery (ages 2 to 3 years) |
| Jeremy Fisher | Nursery (ages 3 to 4 years) |
| Kindergarten | Nursery (ages 3 to 4 years) |

2. KEY FINDINGS

2.1 The quality of the pupils' academic and other achievements is excellent.

- Pupils display excellent attitudes to their work, work independently and collaboratively with ease, and are highly enthusiastic in their lessons.
- Pupils apply sophisticated study skills for their age to solve problems, analyse source material and think creatively.
- Pupils are extremely articulate and write with maturity and skill.
- Pupils are highly numerate mathematicians who demonstrate a love of number.

2.2 The quality of the pupils' personal development is excellent.

- Pupils make confident and mature choices, readily accepting responsibility for their studies and their own well-being.
- Pupils demonstrate high levels of spiritual understanding, compassion for others and an appreciation of non-material aspects of life.
- Pupils have an excellent understanding of rules and laws, creating their own with thought and care.
- Pupils have a highly developed sense of social responsibility, taking on responsibilities in school and initiating change at home and further afield.

Recommendation

2.3 In the context of the excellent outcomes the school might wish to consider:

- Developing marking and target setting systems to enhance pupils' understanding of how to improve their work.

3. THE QUALITY OF PUPILS' ACADEMIC AND OTHER ACHIEVEMENTS

- 3.1 The quality of pupils' academic and other achievements is excellent.
- 3.2 Pupils of all ages are highly engaged, enthusiastic and committed learners, demonstrating outstanding attitudes to learning, in fulfilment of the school's aims. Pupils enjoy their lessons, throwing themselves into their tasks with passion and a hunger to learn in response to engaging teaching, which takes pupils' different needs into account and provides challenging and creative opportunities in class. Younger children use their initiative to solve problems, recognising that working together is often the best way, whether when helping to put out a pretend fire in role play activities or solving mathematics problems together. Collaboration in class is the norm, such as regular paired work in literacy lessons, and group work in mathematics. Older pupils say that they find all their lessons interesting. A group were delighted when teaching responded to the challenge of making algebra exciting with a creative practical strategy, reflecting the school's aim to combine traditional teaching with progressive ideas. Pupils relish the opportunity to select their own level of work. They aim to complete challenging tasks and assess their own ability to do so effectively. Pupils want to improve their work and listen carefully to their teachers, embracing the advice they are given and integrating it into their studies.
- 3.3 As a result of their outstanding learning skills, pupils develop excellent skills, knowledge and understanding in key areas of learning by the time they leave the school, which they use effectively to expand their studies, particularly in project work. Pupils attainment is above expectations for their ages, promoted by strong leadership which promotes achievement through regular monitoring through observations, work scrutiny and data analysis, staff training and discussion. Pupils achieve high levels of success in gaining places and scholarships to their first choices of senior school, including local selective grammar and independent schools. Pupils explain their work spontaneously and thoroughly, demonstrating a secure knowledge and understanding of tasks and their outcomes. Pupils of all abilities make good progress in response to the high level of knowledge of the pupils' individual needs and use of support or challenge evident in lessons and in planning documents. The school identifies pupils with individual talents who are also highly motivated, and these pupils achieve at a particularly high level in their areas of strength, which range from sports and performing arts to mathematics, history and engineering. These pupils engage fully with a range of activities designed to further their talents and enjoy the opportunity to initiate their own activities as well as to participate in those outside school.
- 3.4 Throughout the school, pupils apply their higher-order thinking skills with confidence and maturity to a range of challenging activities. From the youngest children using non-fiction books to identify animals in their bug-hunt, to older pupils deciding how to create and effect advertisement, pupils thrive on opportunities to hypothesise and analyse. They apply their advanced skills, knowledge and understanding to all subjects with success. Leaders promote innovative and creative teaching to develop these skills, and pupils are able to utilise and extend their skills routinely in lessons. In the EYFS, children discussed the best way to create a trench, using their past experiences to inform their choices, whilst in a registration session, older pupils responded imaginatively when asked to consider questions such as what life would be like if everything was black and white. Older pupils considered the relative merits of different famous scientists and used their analytical skills effectively to identify the feelings and emotions of characters in books. Pupils carry out their own research and present their ideas and conclusions, explaining their decisions and justifying their answers with knowledge and clarity.
- 3.5 Pupils demonstrate excellent communication skills at all ages. They are extremely articulate inside and outside the classroom, keen to share their ideas and well equipped with the

vocabulary necessary to communicate their views on a range of issues. Pupils contribute with confidence because teaching provides numerous opportunities for them to develop their speaking skills in lessons, characterised by a consistently positive and encouraging environment. Pupils utilise high levels of written skills in many subjects as is evident in their books. They write about feelings as well as facts and opinions, such as when considering the challenges faced by Christopher Columbus's sailors. Pupils acquire secure reading skills at an early age, and these, together with their writing, develop quickly to a high standard. Pupils read their own work with confidence and fluency, including pupils with SEND and EAL, who often make exceptional levels of progress in this aspect of their learning. Older pupils enjoy being challenged to read material that is often beyond their years, and discuss literature with insight and maturity. Pupils' listening skills are well developed, encouraged by the culture of respect which permeates the school. They listen to each other as well as to their teachers, who lead them skilfully in class discussions, which are often powerful in capturing pupils' imaginations.

- 3.6 Pupils demonstrate a love of mathematics in their lessons and in discussions. They are talented mathematicians who apply mathematical concepts effectively within other subject areas and enjoy opportunities to assess their own success. Pupils speak with enthusiasm about mathematics and show high levels of accuracy in mathematical tasks both in class and their books, where careful marking and setting of targets often help them to understand how to improve. Good use is made of an online mathematics programme, which pupils view as a treat to be done after their homework is finished. Pupils achieve at high levels in response to highly engaging teaching in small classes which provides different activities to suit individual pupils' needs, and carefully directed questions. Younger pupils solved money problems involving change, whilst older ones used their prior knowledge of shape and space when measuring a perimeter. By the time they leave the school, pupils use their mathematical skills almost unthinkingly, relishing the challenges of topics such as algebra.
- 3.7 Pupils' information and communication technology (ICT) skills are well developed and are used effectively in other subjects. In response to the recommendation of the previous inspection report, increased opportunities to use technology have been introduced in the EYFS, and children apply their skills productively in a range of subjects, handling smaller devices in the classroom with confidence and using computers to carry out research with their teachers. Pupils develop programming skills well because their prior attainment is taken into account in planning, and different activities are provided so as to allow them to build on their skills at their own levels. Older pupils use their excellent skills to good effect in activities such as the modelling of a human heart and the creation of communities who decide how best to barter and trade online.
- 3.8 Pupils make good progress in lessons and over time, as seen in assessment records and books. Pupils considered in interview that they develop their skills and understanding well, particularly in English and mathematics. Almost all pupils who completed the pre-inspection questionnaire said that the school gives them the opportunity to learn and make progress, and those interviewed felt that they would leave the school as competent, successful learners. Inspection evidence confirms this. A small minority of pupils disagreed in the questionnaire that marking helps them to improve their work, and a majority said that they do not know how well they are doing in their subjects. Inspectors found that although some marking is clear in giving pupils advice about how to improve their work and some pupils are aware of their targets, this is not consistent across all subjects. A few parents said in the questionnaire that they do not feel that their children's educational needs are met effectively by the school. Inspection evidence shows that pupils of all abilities, including those with SEND or EAL, and the most able, make at least good progress and achieve at high levels in lessons and in written work.

- 3.9 Pupils are successful at local, regional, county and national levels in a wide range of sports, including gymnastics, swimming and skiing. The school's triathlon event for local schools has promoted success in this area for pupils, aided by enthusiastic teaching, characterised by careful planning to accommodate pupils of all abilities, which ensures the success and enthusiasm of pupils of all abilities in sport. Pupils have achieved consistently high results in external drama examinations. They regularly receive awards at the local drama festival, and have been recognised in a national schools' art competition. In the questionnaire, a few parents disagreed that the school provides a good choice of extra-curricular activities. Inspectors consider that a wide range of clubs and activities is provided, and pupils stated in interviews that there are sometimes too many to choose from. The school's 'have a go' culture encourages pupils to feel they can join in with any activity, resulting in high levels of success overall.

4. THE QUALITY OF THE PUPILS' PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT

- 4.1 The quality of the pupils' personal development is excellent.
- 4.2 Pupils of all ages demonstrate high levels of personal development, in line with the school's aim to enable them to achieve their full potential personally, socially and spiritually.
- 4.3 Pupils have an extremely well-developed sense of social responsibility. They are keen to take on roles in school and to improve the lives of others both locally and further afield. Younger pupils take pride in the diligent discharge of duties such as taking the register to the office and being the daily special helper. In their final year, all pupils have a significant role to play and do so with commitment and enthusiasm, because school leaders ensure pupils are given increasing amounts of responsibility as they move through the school. Younger pupils look up to their older role models, who carry out responsibilities such as head of school, and house and sports captains, and help to run clubs for younger pupils, which they initiate themselves. Pupils in their penultimate year at the school take on these roles temporarily with success when their older peers are out of school. Pupils of different ages form the school council, where they represent the views and ideas of their class productively, as well as informing them of the council's decisions. The council has been instrumental in helping the Friends of Hutton Manor to create the 'Secret Garden' and purchasing playground equipment, as well as identifying new charities for the school to support. Pupils support a local charity for the homeless and visit a home for the elderly where they entertain and chat with the residents. Pupils regularly raise money for national charities through house-based challenges. Pupils often bring new causes to the attention of the school by themselves, confident in the knowledge that teachers and leaders will listen to them and respond positively. They are proud of the differences they have made, such as the willow dome in the garden and the funds they have raised to enable communities in Africa to have clean water, a project brought to the school's attention by a pupil.
- 4.4 From the earliest age, pupils make decisions successfully. The youngest children make healthy food choices at snack and meal times and they regularly choose which activities to engage in during the day. As they grow older, pupils become more aware that they have responsibility for their own behaviour through the decisions they make. They are clear about the decisions they need to take in order to achieve educational goals, such as when choosing which level of task to tackle in class. Pupils in Year 6 requested a change in the language they were taught, resulting in their learning Spanish in their final term, and made sophisticated choices when undertaking a project where they established their own independent state.
- 4.5 Pupils demonstrate high levels of spiritual understanding. They speak with consideration for others and show empathy in their discussions and writing. In an English lesson, pupils discussed the feelings of those on board the Titanic and imagined how the ship itself might feel, creating poems which conveyed a deep sense of loneliness and loss. Younger pupils wrote about the feelings of those who bully and who are bullied, and prayers written by pupils demonstrate a mature and considered understanding of worldly and non-material needs. Pupils value opportunities to reflect in assemblies and break times. Pupils appreciate the space to find a quiet place at break time provided by the school grounds. Older pupils appreciate that some matters are too difficult for younger ones to consider, but recognise the value of opportunities in assembly to reflect on the impact of disasters on those affected by them. They value democracy and freedom and understand the impact that a political system may have on these.
- 4.6 Pupils have excellent moral understanding. They have a well-developed respect for rules and sanctions; they understand how rules apply to them and why they need to be in place. When devising their class rules, pupils understand how they contribute to the well-being of those in

the class. They understand that rules help them to stay happy and safe, and respond well to books and visual clues which remind them about this. Daily sessions in which children are reminded of rules in the EYFS set the tone for the day, and pupils of this age work and play with care and consideration for each other. In the questionnaire, almost all pupils said that the school encourages them to behave well, and this was observed to be the case across the school, where excellent behaviour is the norm. Pupils know about the laws of the land and are able to consider options for laws, choosing which will ensure a better quality of life for the community. In their final year project, the oldest pupils not only devised the laws for their independent state, but also considered carefully how best to ensure that they were adhered to.

- 4.7 Pupils are highly confident and self-assured because the school is diligent in promoting a culture where pupils feel valued and success is celebrated. Pupils of all ages are confident that they will achieve their goals if they persevere, in an environment that encourages them to commit themselves without fear of failure. Pupils have a strong understanding of self, and speak without embarrassment of curriculum areas where they have needed support or experienced difficulties. They develop confidence because small class sizes ensure every pupil is extremely well known by their teacher and regular meetings of all staff and clear lines of communication enable a personalised approach to be taken with every pupil. Pupils know how to improve their personal development, being given clear guidance by their teachers, who they perceive as strong role models. They are happy to take responsibility for their own learning, being nurtured by the school to do so, and they are very well prepared emotionally and personally for transitions within the school and to their senior schools.
- 4.8 Pupils demonstrate a great love of working and playing together, to help each other and to achieve common goals. Pupils of all ages decide on their class rules together, and those in Year 6 requested a change in the language they were taught, resulting in their learning Spanish in their final term. Joint decisions were taken on a sophisticated level in the final year independent state project. Decisions about a flag and motto, laws and how to enforce them had to be made collectively, as well as which form of democracy to use. Debates were held about a number of issues, including a 'balloon' debate, where pupils had to consider the merits of different scientists and decide which ones had the most value to the world. Pupils of all ages spoke with great enthusiasm of fund-raising activities where pupils from all classes worked in their houses to build dens when raising funds for charity. Pupils feel safe when working together on organised projects, in the playground, sporting activities and in free play. They feel able to try new things and ask for help of each other.
- 4.9 Pupils display a wide knowledge and understanding of different faiths and cultures and of the values of their own country and culture. Younger children do not discriminate between those of different backgrounds, and enjoy learning about different faiths through the celebration of festivals throughout the year. Older pupils understand that the school does not tolerate any disrespect towards those from different backgrounds and act accordingly. They thrive on opportunities to learn about different countries on an international day, and individual pupils are keen to share their own cultures and customs with their classmates. Pupils show a mature understanding of those who may need support in class. They are patient and encouraging of their classmates and quick to congratulate each other on their achievements. In the questionnaire, most parents agreed that the school actively promotes values of democracy, respect and tolerance of those with different faiths and beliefs, and all pupils agreed that the school encourages them to respect other people.
- 4.10 Pupils of all ages have an excellent understanding of how to stay safe and healthy. Pupils recognise the importance of a healthy diet, and the school chef is instrumental in helping them to make good choices at lunchtimes. Exercise is promoted by the school through the

curriculum and a range of additional sporting activities, and these are well attended and appreciated by the pupils. Younger children enjoy daily exercise sessions and a range of healthy snacks, and this has helped to develop their understanding of healthy lifestyles, in line with the recommendation of the previous inspection report. Throughout the school, pupils are well informed as to how to stay safe in school and online, and they are quick to identify adults they could talk to if they were worried or concerned.