

Weatherfield Academy

Brewers Hill Road, Dunstable, LU6 1AF

Inspection dates 26–27 September 2013

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Satisfactory	3
	This inspection:	Good	2
Achievement of pupils		Good	2
Quality of teaching		Good	2
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Good	2
Leadership and management		Good	2

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school.

- The headteacher has a clear and ambitious vision for the academy. He is ably supported by other senior staff, trustees and governors and together they have created a caring and supportive ethos in which all pupils flourish.
- Pupils' achievement across the academy is good. From low starting points they make good progress, particularly in literacy, mathematics and their personal development.
- The quality of teaching is good. Good monitoring of teaching and the effective professional development of staff have increased the levels of consistently good and sometimes outstanding teaching.
- The overall effectiveness of the sixth form is good. The activities are well matched to the individual pupils and provide a range of both academic and vocational options.
- The wide and rich learning opportunities meet the needs of the pupils very well. These enable pupils to achieve accredited outcomes and make good progress in developing their social skills.
- Relationships between staff and pupils are highly supportive and mutually respectful. Staff help pupils to build their confidence and self-esteem extremely well and everyone at the academy strives 'to become the best person you can be'.
- Leadership and management are good. All aspects of the academy's performance are regularly analysed and this supports well-targeted development planning. Governors and trustees know the academy well and were very proactive in the establishment of the sixth form.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- There is not enough outstanding teaching to enable pupils to make exceptional progress.
- Information and procedures to gather information on pupils' attainment and progress do not always identify the progress made from individual starting points.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 15 lessons, nine of which were joint observations with the headteacher. In addition, inspectors made short visits to lessons and heard pupils read.
- Meetings were held with a trustee of the academy, senior and middle leaders and subject teachers.
- Inspectors talked to pupils and parents to gain their views of the school in addition to reviewing the academy's own parent and carer survey. There were insufficient responses to Parent View (the Ofsted online survey) to be reported. Inspectors also reviewed 29 questionnaires returned by staff.
- Many documents were reviewed, including those relating to pupils behaviour progress and attendance, school self evaluation and improvement, curriculum and lesson planning, governance and keeping pupils safe. Work in pupils' books was also seen.

Inspection team

Lynda Walker, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Kate Robertson

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- Weatherfield Academy was established on 1 March 2012 and provides education for a wide range of needs, including moderate and severe learning difficulties, autistic spectrum conditions and behaviour, emotional and social difficulties.
- There are 111 pupils aged seven to 17 years on roll, seven having joined the new sixth form provision which opened in September 2013. All pupils have statements of special educational needs.
- Over half of the academy's pupils are eligible for the pupil premium, the additional funding provided to support pupils known to be eligible for free school meals and children looked after by the local authority; this is significantly above the national average.
- The majority of the pupils are of White British heritage.
- None of the academy's pupils attend an alternative provision.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Increase the proportion of outstanding teaching in all year groups by ensuring that all pupils are working to levels which extend their knowledge, skills and understanding through:
 - ensuring that activities in the classroom challenge each pupil at their level throughout the lesson
 - reducing teacher talk to allow pupils more opportunity to undertake planned activities, practical work, group work or independent research
 - ensuring that additional adults in the room are always used effectively to enable the pupils to make progress during the lesson.
- Ensure that that the data on individuals and groups of pupils is organised and presented in a way that clearly identifies their starting points on entry to the academy or to a different key stage in order to be able to recognise and celebrate their good achievements over time.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils is good

- The low starting points for pupils when they enter the school means that although they learn and develop well as a result of good teaching, their attainment remains low when compared to pupil nationally.
- Pupils' achievement in sporting activities is good. The academy has targeted the recent primary sports funding to employ qualified coaches and increase the opportunities for eligible pupils to have wider access to different sports.
- As pupils move through the academy, they are well supported for the next steps in education or training. Almost all make rapid progress from their starting points so that by the time they leave at the end of Key Stage 4 they have gained passes in Functional Skills English and mathematics, AQA Entry levels and other courses accredited by the National College Open Network. With the introduction of a sixth form provision, the academy has recognised the need to ensure that there are appropriate accreditation routes that will ensure pupils' continued progress. All sixth formers have made a good start to the school year and are progressing well.
- The academy's drive to improve literacy levels results in pupils making enhanced progress in this area. The consistent teaching of letters and sounds (phonics) across the academy means that the majority of the pupils have developed the ability to recognise sounds and letters, and by the time they leave school many are able to read with confidence and fluency.
- Pupils achieve well no matter what their background or circumstances. There is no significant difference between the achievement of girls and boys, any ethnic minority groups or pupils with specific special educational needs.
- Pupils receiving support through the pupil premium make similar good progress to others because the funds have been used effectively to provide additional staff and resources, counselling and staff training, and equal access to enrichment activities. Overall, there is no significant difference between the achievement of eligible pupils and others.
- The building of positive, trusting relationships with staff help pupils to feel confident and learn how to succeed. Pupils are strongly motivated to push themselves to increase their rates of progress and speak confidently about their 'learning ladders' which identify their personal targets for improvement.
- Teachers and support staff are very skilled in improving pupils' achievement through individual interventions. The newly established 'Base' has enabled the most challenging pupils to engage in learning and achieve in a positive educational setting.
- The academy regularly checks the progress of individuals and groups but this is not organised and presented in such a way that teachers, leaders and governors are able to quickly identify those pupils who may only be making expected progress. As a result, the academy cannot be sure that it provides appropriate interventions and support to enable them to exceed expectations.
- Parents and carers are very proud of the progress their children have made since starting at the academy. One commented that: 'My son now has a future which he didn't have before. He gets work that he can do but there are high expectations and targets for him which he is working

hard to achieve.'

The quality of teaching is good

- The quality of teaching over time is good. There is some outstanding practice evident. Teachers nearly always have high expectations and use their knowledge of pupils' strengths and weaknesses to plan lessons which challenge each individual to do well. Because of the strong improvements in planning, the rates of the progress made in the last year by pupils, including those in receipt of pupil premium, have increased.
- Teachers have high expectations of pupils and usually set work that is well matched to their ability. In a few lessons, teachers do not take sufficient account of the information about pupils' previous learning and progress when setting work.
- Teaching in the sixth form is good. Relationships between the staff and the pupils contribute significantly to the good progress in lessons.
- In the best teaching, teachers and other adults are very skilled in their questioning to check what the pupils already know and adapt their teaching where necessary to improve learning.
- All teachers and teaching assistants have had training in teaching reading through using the sounds that letters make. This has had a significant impact on pupils' reading skills and the subsequent confidence they have gained in speaking and listening.
- Verbal and written feedback to pupils is encouraging and constructive. The marking of pupils work is helpful and this, together with the 'learning ladders', ensures that all of the pupils know what they need to do to improve further.
- Team work is very strong and teachers and support staff work very effectively together. Pupils are generally given very good individual support in lessons. There are very positive relationships between staff and the pupils. The staff are skilled at consistently using the school's reward system to motivate the pupils to try their best, complete work set and behave well in lessons.
- In some lessons, teachers talk for too long and so pupils do not spend as much time as they could on getting on with the tasks set for them. This reduces pupils' interest and slows their progress.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- The warmth and positive regard with which all staff treat the pupils enables them to offer support and guidance which is listened to and acted upon. Pupils take pride in the academy and treat adults and each other with courtesy and respect.
- The introduction of 'The Base' has been very successful in improving behaviour. Pupils who attend there are sensitively counselled to establish what is preventing them from learning. They are given practical ideas to help them and their teachers to deal with their difficulties.
- Pupils' enjoyment of being at the academy is evident. In lessons, pupils are keen to learn and they are proud of the work they do especially looking after the animals on the farm, growing vegetables and making hanging baskets that they can sell.

- Pupils say they feel safe in school and that they know what to do if bullying was a problem. Safety and bullying, including cyber bullying, are covered in lessons such as personal, social and health education. Discriminatory behaviour is rare and dealt with well when it occurs.
- No evidence of any unkindness or any type of bullying was seen during the inspection and a review of the school documentation confirms this is typical of school life. The calm atmosphere in the school helps to promote positive relationships, turn taking and sharing.
- The attendance of pupils is average and the academy has worked hard to stress the importance of good attendance and this has improved well.

The leadership and management are good

- The dynamic leadership of the headteacher is ensuring rapid improvement. He has a clear vision of how the academy needs to develop and translates this into high expectations of staff performance and well-focused educational and business plans. The academy has the capacity for further improvement.
- The senior leadership has been strengthened and is committed, enthusiastic and well informed. It provides effective support to the headteacher in his focus on continual improvement in all areas of academic and personal performance. As a result, teaching is good and rates of progress are improving in all subjects.
- The headteacher and staff are committed to creating equality of opportunity by tackling any discrimination and giving the pupils the best possible chances to succeed in life.
- The academy evaluates its performance accurately and comprehensively. It uses its findings to produce plans and actions that lead to continuous improvement. Staff, parents and carers, and other stakeholders are kept well informed and support the plans.
- The academy provides an effective and developing curriculum. It provides a wide range of suitable experience and is well monitored for its effectiveness in meeting pupils' needs. Subject leaders are effective in monitoring teaching, learning and assessment of progress. Older pupils have a developing range of work-related and vocational learning leading to accreditation. Leaders are seeking to build on the opportunities for working on the farm and using the whole academy environment as a resource for the younger pupils in order to support independence and the development of skills for life.
- Pupils who have joined the sixth form are keen to pursue the qualifications in key life skills which prepare them well for life after school. The provision is well led and there are well developed plans for its expansion.
- School leaders monitor the progress of the pupils and groups of pupils well. Although the data provides teachers with a good view about how most of the pupils are performing in comparison with others, it is not always presented in a way that makes it clear their starting points on entry to the academy or key stage.
- Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. They are sensitive to the needs of others and their own safety, and have an appropriate knowledge of right and wrong.
- Teaching standards are monitored very closely and the senior team is relentless in seeking improvement. Points for improvement in teachers' work are linked effectively to training

opportunities and to performance management arrangements. Teachers' performance is tied closely to national benchmarks. The procedures are transparent and fully communicated to staff. Because of this, morale is high and the academy is characterised by enthusiasm and cheerful attitudes.

- Parents and carers are extremely positive in their praise for the development and improvements since becoming an academy. They are especially appreciative of the way that staff keep them informed, work with them and show flexibility in meeting the individual needs of the pupils.
 - The school makes good use of the pupil premium in order to provide additional support, such as individual counselling and literacy interventions. It monitors closely the progress of pupils eligible for this funding and targets its support accordingly.
 - The recently introduced primary sports funding is also well deployed in raising the achievement of primary pupils.
 - The school fully meets the requirements of safeguarding of pupils. It carries out the necessary checks on all staff to ensure they are suitable to work with children and all staff receive the appropriate training and guidance. Staff are caring and closely monitor the well-being of all pupils.
- **The governance of the school:**
- Governance is strong and effective and meets all statutory duties such as those relating to safeguarding and preventing discrimination. Governors and trustees know about the quality of teaching through observing lessons and looking at information about pupils' progress. They are clear about how the pupil premium funding is spent and can identify the positive effect this is having on those eligible. They fully appreciate the links between the management of teachers' performance and their pay and responsibilities. They have a clear understanding of how the leadership team of the academy are driving the rapid improvements and ensure that they provide the necessary challenge and support for this to continue.

What inspection judgements mean

School		
Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	An outstanding school is highly effective in delivering outcomes that provide exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs. This ensures that pupils are very well equipped for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 2	Good	A good school is effective in delivering outcomes that provide well for all its pupils' needs. Pupils are well prepared for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 3	Requires improvement	A school that requires improvement is not yet a good school, but it is not inadequate. This school will receive a full inspection within 24 months from the date of this inspection.
Grade 4	Inadequate	<p>A school that has serious weaknesses is inadequate overall and requires significant improvement but leadership and management are judged to be Grade 3 or better. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p> <p>A school that requires special measures is one where the school is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the school's leaders, managers or governors have not demonstrated that they have the capacity to secure the necessary improvement in the school. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p>

School details

Unique reference number	137896
Local authority	Central Bedfordshire
Inspection number	425184

This inspection of the school was carried out under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

Type of school	Special
School category	Academy converter
Age range of pupils	7–19
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in the sixth form	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	111
Of which, number on roll in sixth form	7
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Jackie Hunt
Headteacher	Joe Selmes
Date of previous school inspection	1–2 March 2012
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