

Woolmer Hill School

Woolmer Hill, Haslemere, GU27 1QB

Inspection dates 9–10 December 2014

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Not previously inspected	
	This inspection:	Good	2
Leadership and management		Good	2
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Good	2
Quality of teaching		Good	2
Achievement of pupils		Good	2

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school.

- The large majority of students attain good results and make good progress in their time at the academy. Achievement in English is especially good, which helps students write well in other subjects.
- Teaching is usually good or better in the vast majority of subjects. Some excellent practice exists and is increasingly shared more widely by teachers.
- The academy ensures that the vast majority of students follow courses that meet their needs well so that they are appropriately prepared for the next stage of their education or employment.
- Senior leaders are highly ambitious for the academy. They are focused relentlessly on improving standards. Most teachers follow this example and seek to improve their practice regularly.
- The headteacher has managed an extensive programme of change effectively. He has brought the budget under control and has addressed underachievement by students and weak performance by teachers.
- Students are proud of the academy. They conduct themselves extremely well, dress smartly, greet visitors warmly and talk clearly about how the school helps them progress.
- The academy makes a strong contribution to students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. It prepares them well for life in modern Britain and helps them to be respectful to and considerate of all people.
- Governance is good because governors know the school well. They understand the challenges the school faces and work well with the headteacher to manage them.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Not all students benefit from teaching which is always good and regularly outstanding.
- Teaching in science is not yet consistently good or effective.
- Disadvantaged students do not consistently make the same good or better progress in all subjects.
- In some lessons the most able students are not always challenged to attain the best possible results.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 29 lessons, 11 of which were conducted jointly with senior leaders.
- Inspectors analysed a range of students' work.
- Meetings were held with the headteacher, school leaders, teachers and six governors.
- Inspectors met with four groups of students in addition to observing students' behaviour and talking to students around the academy. Inspectors also heard five Year 7 students read.
- A range of the academy's documentation was checked carefully, including information about students' achievement, the academy's own checks on its performance, the academy's action plan, the headteacher's reports to the governing body, notes of visits by the local authority, a wide range of policies and the academy's arrangements to keep students safe.
- Inspectors analysed 76 responses from parents to Ofsted's online questionnaire (Parent View). Inspectors also met with a group of seven parents and took account of five letters from parents.
- Forty-one responses to Ofsted's confidential staff survey were analysed.

Inspection team

Dr Simon Hughes, Lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

Gordon Jackson

Additional inspector

Genevieve Usher

Additional inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- Woolmer Hill converted to an academy school on 17 August 2011. When the predecessor school, Woolmer Hill Technology College, was last inspected by Ofsted, it was judged to be good overall.
- This is a much smaller-than-average secondary academy.
- The proportion of disabled students and those who have special educational needs is above average.
- The proportion of students who are eligible for support from the pupil premium (additional government funding) is below average.
- The very large majority of students are from White British backgrounds.
- A very small minority of students have English as an additional language.
- The academy has partnerships with several providers of alternative education such as Godalming College, Guildford College, M.I.T., West Byfleet, The Wey Centre, Haslemere, and Merrist Wood.
- The headteacher is actively involved in the leadership of the Waverley schools federation.
- The academy meets the current government floor standards.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Ensure that a greater proportion of teaching is outstanding by:
 - enabling teachers to share existing good practice more widely
 - improving the consistency with which teachers apply the academy's marking policy
 - giving students time in lessons to respond to teachers' marking and improve their work
 - challenging the most able students at all times and in all subjects to achieve the highest standards.
- Raise the levels of achievement in science of all students, and all groups of students, by:
 - continuing to strengthen leadership within the department
 - making more frequent checks on students' progress in science
 - extending support offered by teaching assistants to students who are falling behind.
- Ensure that disadvantaged students consistently achieve as well as other students by:
 - checking their progress in each subject regularly
 - focusing more sharply the additional support funded by the pupil premium
 - providing more opportunities for supported study.

Inspection judgements

The leadership and management are good

- The headteacher is ambitious for the school. He communicates his vision clearly. The vast majority of the staff now share this vision and work with the headteacher to make it happen.
 - The academy aims 'to offer a high standard of education which prepares our pupils to be highly motivated, responsible and well-qualified young adults'. Senior leaders work relentlessly to ensure that this happens. Senior leaders changed management information systems so that they can more easily track students' progress and intervene more quickly if students begin to fall behind.
 - Leaders at all levels, through performance management, have rightly prioritised improvements to the quality of teaching so that inconsistency reduces. As a result, there is very little weak teaching and an increasing proportion that is outstanding.
 - The inclusive ethos of the academy means that the school actively promotes equal opportunities and tackles discrimination. Much of this work is undertaken in personal, social and health education and in assemblies. However, students are provided with ample opportunities for spiritual, moral, social and cultural development in other parts of the curriculum. For example, in a Year 9 mathematics lesson, students were skilfully led to an understanding of the wonder of mathematics when investigating triangular shapes. 'Wow! I didn't even know that!' said one student.
 - The academy has fostered very good relationships with the local community. For example, the academy has successfully represented Haslemere's local Society of St George on St George's Day. The academy has been commended by the local Royal British Legion for its charitable work in remembrance of the fallen of two world wars. The programme of assemblies further supports effectively the academy's efforts to promote fundamental British values.
 - Leaders constantly review the curriculum so that it best meets the needs of all students, is broad and deep and provides a good balance of academic, technical and creative subjects.
 - The checks that the academy makes on its own progress are thorough and accurate. Senior leaders are open and honest about where improvements are required. Senior leaders are adept at judging the quality of learning and progress in lessons. They are able to provide teachers with effective feedback which helps improve teaching.
 - The academy has a full programme of good-quality training for teachers. Some of this training is arranged between teachers in the academy and some of it is provided by others from the Waverley Federation. Middle leaders also benefit from the training that is provided by examination boards, and this has made their assessment work more accurate.
 - The majority of middle leaders, including subject leaders, provide their teams with effective leadership. They hold teachers to account well for their work and also provide guidance on how they can improve aspects of their practice. Year leaders contribute well to the good order around the academy and effectively support the students who need additional pastoral care. The academy's special educational needs coordinator ensures that disabled students and those with special educational needs have equal access to good teaching and focused support. As a result, these students prosper at the academy or through alternative placements.
 - Students benefit from good-quality information, advice and guidance from Year 9 onwards. Consequently only one student was not in education, employment or training when they left Year 11 in 2014. Students receive impartial advice on options in Year 9, and about what courses might be best for them post-16 throughout Key Stage 4.
 - Parents commended the academy for its recent work to improve the quality of information they receive about their children's progress. They said that general communications have also improved.
 - The academy receives good-quality support from the Waverley Federation and an external consultant who helps check regularly the quality of its work. The local authority provides professional and expert support through its School Overview Partner. All strategic partners have confidence in the leadership of the academy.
 - Leaders monitor closely the quality of provision and outcomes for students in alternative placements, acting quickly to address any practice which falls short of expectations.
- **The governance of the school:**
- Governors contribute well to the leadership of the academy. They know its strengths and weaknesses and monitor carefully how it is progressing through careful reading and analysis of data and other information. They know how well the school is doing compared to local schools and other schools nationally. They are working with the headteacher, the Education Funding Agency and the local

authority on an impressive five-year plan to reduce the forecast budget deficit. This deficit was skilfully predicted as the governors took early account of the reducing numbers of age 11 students coming through the academy's feeder schools.

- Governors have provided focused support for a re-organisation of the leadership team and the restructuring of the rest of the staffing. They challenge the headteacher on all aspects of the academy's work in formal meetings and in their more frequent visits. They ensure that the headteacher's performance is managed appropriately. They are aware of his policy of ensuring that only good performance by teachers is rewarded.
- Governors manage the relatively small amount of pupil premium funding efficiently and know the difference it is making. They aim to ensure that it always results in support where it is most needed.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good.
- Students conduct themselves extremely well around the academy. Their behaviour in lessons is good so that learning is hardly ever disrupted.
- Older students say that there have been marked improvements in behaviour during their time at the academy. Parents also report that behaviour has improved considerably in the last 18 months.
- Students arrive at school and in lessons on time. They wear their uniform with pride and take care with their appearance. Work in their books is generally well presented and they take care with the preparation of examination portfolios and coursework. This gives a very good impression of their attitudes to school and their studies.
- Students and the vast majority of staff welcome the consistent and fair approach to managing behaviour that has caused these improvements. The academy's values of resilience, resourcefulness, reflectiveness and relationships are agreed by all and underpin well all aspects of its work.
- Senior leaders keep clear records of any incidents and monitor this information carefully. These records show that action is taken early when necessary. As a result, the use of exclusion as a punishment is decreasing. The number of sessions lost to exclusion is reducing rapidly.
- Students and parents are clear that bullying occurs rarely and is dealt with effectively. The inclusive ethos of the school means that racist or homophobic bullying or the use of derogatory language are not tolerated. They hardly ever happen.
- Rates of attendance have improved rapidly to be in line with national averages currently, as a result of urgent and direct action taken by the academy's leaders.
- Careful monitoring ensures that students at alternative placements attend well and behave as well as they do when in school.

Safety

- The academy's work to keep pupils safe and secure is good.
- The checks that the academy makes on people working with students are thorough and rigorous.
- Robust risk assessments are carried out for all off-site educational activities. Senior leaders ensure that students at alternative educational placements are kept safe. They share good-quality assurance processes with other partners in the Waverley Federation.
- The academy's extensive grounds are secure and well maintained. There is no litter and senior leaders are harnessing the good will of the community to carry out a rolling programme of decoration and improvement.
- Students say that they feel safe at the academy and as they travel to and from it. Parents agree wholeheartedly.
- The academy ensures that students know how to keep themselves safe. There is a full programme of personal, social and health education and a range of assemblies which cover topics such as e-safety, drugs and alcohol awareness.

The quality of teaching is good

- Teaching in the vast majority of subjects, and across all year groups, is usually good and some of it is outstanding. Excellent practice exists in English and drama. Teaching is improving strongly in mathematics, ICT and business studies as a result of effective recruitment. Teaching in PE and modern

foreign languages also has strengths.

- The large majority of teachers have high expectations of what the students can achieve, in keeping with senior leaders' ambitions. They have good relationships with all students so that lessons are conducted in a pleasant atmosphere.
- A full range of strategies are used by teachers to ensure that learning is usually tailored to students' needs. In one drama lesson, students coached each other, judging accurately the quality of each other's performance and how it could be improved. In a mathematics lesson, each student was provided with a well-thought-out individual task to support exercises in an online learning program.
- Teaching in science is not consistently good enough yet to ensure that results are securely good or better. However, when teaching has been planned well, such as in a Year 8 lesson on electromagnetism, progress is faster.
- Teachers are becoming increasingly good at pausing to check students' learning in lessons. The most skilled teachers confidently change course when they realise students need more work in a specific topic or skill. Many question students carefully to ensure knowledge is developing and understanding growing.
- Homework is used by many teachers to extend learning outside lessons. It is sometimes used to prepare for future lessons. These good uses of homework are not found consistently in all subjects. Parents say that the quality of homework has been improved recently but could be even more purposeful. They also say this about marking.
- Most teachers now mark work in keeping with the academy's policy. They tell students what went well and how work might be even better. They increasingly ask students to respond to their marking, but not all students do so. Time is not always provided for students to improve their work or make corrections in lessons.
- Teaching is often supported effectively by well-trained higher-level teaching assistants. Since January 2013, the academy has had to reduce the number of learning support assistants. The academy has provided good-quality training for those who remain so that they are more efficient in their work. The vast majority work with class teachers in the planning and delivery of good-quality lessons. As a result, the targeted students make better progress.
- The most able students are provided with regular opportunities to extend their knowledge, skills and experiences. In some lessons, though, they receive work that is too easy because it is the same as for other students.
- Teachers in all subjects reinforce skills learned in English and mathematics appropriately. For example, students use number skills in science and business studies and are able to accurately plot coordinates in geography.

The achievement of pupils is good

- In 2014, the majority of students at the end of Key Stage 4 achieved five good GCSE passes including English and mathematics. This is according to officially published figures and taking into account the result of the first attempt at the examination in English. A much greater proportion achieved five good GCSE passes, more than the national average, taking into account students' best result in English.
- A higher proportion of girls made expected progress in English than boys, but an even greater proportion of boys made expected progress than girls in mathematics. This is one example in 2014 of where achievement in the school was variable in groups and subjects, even though the overall outcomes were positive.
- In consultation with parents and students, senior leaders opted to enter students for English early in November 2013 so that they could benefit from work already completed. However, even without second entries, 79% of students made expected progress in English, more than the national average, and 30% made more-than-expected progress, only fractionally less than other students nationally.
- GCSE results in languages and humanities were also strong, improving as part of a rising trend. The results in science were disappointing in 2014, with only just over half the students achieving well. This was similar to performance in science overall in 2013. Senior leaders have acted decisively to address this situation and, as a result, evidence was seen of improving performance in the current academic year.
- Students enter the academy, in most years, with broadly average attainment. During their time at the academy they generally make better progress than their peers nationally, averaging out results in their best eight GCSE subjects.
- Students generally achieve good standards in most BTEC vocational qualifications. They are particularly successful in the functional skills elements.
- Disadvantaged students do not always achieve standards that compare favourably with their classmates'. The difference in performance is less than half a grade on average. However, in 2014 the gaps in the

progress they made widened between them and other students nationally when they had been closing in the two years previously. The gap is reduced when account is taken of these students' best entry in English, not the first. Disadvantaged students, on average, were entered for two less GCSE qualifications than their classmates because they chose vocational qualifications in Key Stage 4 which better matched their career and work plans.

- Students who have English as an additional language achieve very well, often achieving better than their classmates.
- There is very little difference between the standards achieved by disabled students and those with special educational needs and their peers. They are supported by a good range of interventions, including targeted work with subject-specialist higher-level teaching assistants. Students who enter the school in Year 7 with below-average reading skills are helped to catch up. The very large majority of the most able students make expected progress in English and mathematics, well above the national average. However, the proportion who make more-than-expected progress is below the national average so that fewer than expected attain the top grades.
- Students read well and often. They make good use of the academy's library, which is stocked with a good range of fiction and non-fiction works.
- The academy does not routinely enter students early for GCSE. Students personally benefitted from repeated entries in English in 2013/14 with a boost of 0.8 on their average point score, with many attaining better grades than their first entry. However, the academy's headline performance was reduced from 63% (best entry) five A* to C including English and mathematics to 53% (first entry) as a result.
- Students who attend alternative provision achieve well because they are engaged in activities that better meet their needs than the mainstream curriculum. They are well supervised and have their progress monitored so that the vast majority achieve suitable qualifications at Level 1 or Level 2. They also develop helpful social and life skills.
- Over time, as teaching has improved, students make more rapid progress in most lessons. Performance in Key Stage 3 is similar to that in Key Stage 4. In some classes, progress is slowed by weaker teaching but many students make increasingly rapid progress when it is good or better.

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	137314
Local authority	Surrey
Inspection number	449692

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

Type of school	Secondary
School category	Academy converter
Age range of pupils	11–16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	523
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mrs Susan Stathers
Headteacher	Matthew Armstrong-Harris
Date of previous school inspection	Not previously inspected
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