

Woking High School

Morton Road, Horsell, Woking GU21 4TJ

Inspection dates 10–11 February 2016

Overall effectiveness **Good**

Effectiveness of leadership and management	Outstanding
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Good
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Outstanding
Outcomes for pupils	Good
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school

- The inspirational headteacher, school leaders and governors have a clear vision for the school that promotes the achievement of every pupil.
- Governance is excellent. Governors use their wide-ranging skills to the best advantage of the school. They provide very effective challenge and support for school leaders.
- Since the academy opened, leaders have relentlessly driven improvement. Their accurate knowledge of the school, and the highly positive, aspirational ethos they have created, is helping to promote further improvement.
- The school’s work to keep pupils safe is outstanding. Pupils are happy and feel very safe and secure in school. Parents are equally enthusiastic in their praise.
- The school works very well with a range of other organisations to meet the diverse needs of its pupils.
- Pupils’ behaviour in lessons and around the school is excellent. They are keen to learn, and work well together to create a harmonious community.
- Pupils’ achievement at GCSE has improved every year since the academy opened and is well above the national average.
- Teachers use their high levels of specialist expertise to provide activities that engage and motivate pupils. Relationships are strong and this helps pupils to learn well.
- The highly effective support provided by teaching assistants promotes independence and good progress by pupils who have special educational needs and those who speak English as an additional language.
- Pupils use many opportunities to take responsibility and develop character and resilience, which prepares them well for life in modern Britain.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- The quality of teaching is not consistently outstanding across the school and this is reflected in some teacher feedback to pupils not having enough impact.
- The work set by teachers is not consistently well matched to pupils’ abilities and the most-able pupils are not consistently challenged.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve teaching to ensure that all pupils, including the most able, make good progress from their different starting points by ensuring that teaching provides:
 - consistently high levels of challenge, appropriate to pupils' needs and abilities
 - feedback to pupils about their work which gives clear guidance on how to improve.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management is outstanding

- The school is very well led by the headteacher. Leaders have established a culture in which every pupil aims to achieve the highest possible standard. Staff are fully committed to helping every pupil learn well and also develop the skills required to have the best possible life chances. The school provides many opportunities for pupils, which they seize eagerly. An aspirational ethos pervades the school.
- Leaders have a good understanding of what is going well within the school and what needs to be even better. Since the academy opened, leaders have shown relentless determination to identify and address weaknesses. There are a number of examples which illustrate this: leaders revised the Key Stage 4 curriculum to meet pupils' needs better and standards of achievement for all groups have improved and are well above national averages. A new department was created to support pupils who arrive at the school speaking little English and these pupils are progressing rapidly. A focus on increasing the proportion of GCSE A* and A grades was successful in 2015. Currently, school leaders are aware of some inconsistencies in teaching and are taking steps to improve this. However, actions taken have not yet led to outstanding teaching, learning and assessment.
- Actions taken by leaders have ensured that the attainment of disadvantaged pupils has continued to rise and the gaps in their attainment compared with that of other pupils nationally have significantly narrowed. Their work was recognised in February 2015 when the school received a letter from the Minister of State for Schools congratulating them on the improvement in Key Stage 4 results for disadvantaged pupils since 2011.
- Middle leaders are enthusiastic and effective in developing teaching and learning in their subject areas. They are held to account by senior leaders, who rigorously review the impact of their work. Subject leaders are considering carefully how to design a curriculum which builds on the prior knowledge and understanding pupils are bringing from primary schools as well as meeting the higher demands of the new GCSE examination specifications. This work is better developed in some subject areas than others and all leaders are clear that this is a priority for further improvement.
- Detailed analyses of examination results and scrutiny of ongoing performance information enable leaders to identify pupils who need additional help. Extra support can then be offered where needed. Progress information is also used to identify where teaching needs to improve.
- The school's training programme is well targeted to meet the school's priorities for improvement. The teaching and learning hub brings together groups of teachers to inspire each other, share best practice and identify teaching that is less effective. This has led to bespoke coaching which has helped to improve the quality of teaching.
- The curriculum is excellent and ensures that pupils achieve well. Leaders ensure that courses are very well matched to pupils' interests and abilities. A highly effective transition group supports pupils who arrive at secondary school needing to catch up. Latin provides an inspiring and challenging subject for pupils to choose. A small number of older pupils participate in highly effective vocational education at other establishments. Citizenship education for all, led by tutors, is valued by pupils as a way of exploring the values of democracy, the rule of law and individual liberty.
- The curriculum is enriched by a wide range of extra-curricular activities, including the Duke of Edinburgh's Award scheme, an orchestra, sporting and cultural activities and clubs that are well attended by pupils. Many pupils participate in trips within this country and abroad. Pupils spoke with enthusiasm about the enrichment activities available during 'Day 11' days, which occur six times a year.
- The school works very effectively to promote equality of opportunity. It makes very good provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Pupils from a variety of different backgrounds show respect for pupils of other faiths, cultures and lifestyles. The school is a Holocaust Beacon school and is also working with Woking Borough Council to raise awareness of a local Muslim burial ground as part of the school's programme of events to mark the centenary of the First World War. Diversity is celebrated and the community is harmonious.
- Staff are highly positive about the school. They feel well supported and describe 'a wonderful working atmosphere at the school'. Many commented on the commitment of leaders to the well-being of pupils and staff, alongside high expectations.

- Parents are overwhelmingly positive about the school. All parents who contributed to Ofsted’s online survey questionnaire, Parent View, would recommend the school to another parent. They all agreed that the school is well led and managed and that their child is happy at the school. ‘We cannot praise the school highly enough’ is a typical remark.
- **The governance of the school**
 - The governing body makes a highly effective contribution to the overall leadership of the school. Governors are aware of the school’s strengths and also areas that could be improved. They are ambitious and use their detailed knowledge to challenge school leaders rigorously.
 - Governors’ wide-ranging expertise is used effectively to check and support different aspects of the school’s work. Governors participate in training and development to enhance their skills.
 - Governors ensure that the school is held to account for the effective use of funding, including pupil premium funding, as well as staff performance management.
- **The arrangements for safeguarding are very effective.**
 - Staff are trained to an appropriate level and a significant number of staff take extra responsibility for maintaining high levels of vigilance with regard to the welfare of pupils.
 - The school has forged links with local organisations to help staff be alert to potential concerns, such as honour-based abuse. Pupils speak with confidence about the approaches they have learned to keep themselves safe.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment is good

- The quality of teaching, learning and assessment is improving and this has helped to drive up pupils’ achievement. Clear routines and strong relationships between staff and pupils build high levels of trust and confidence so that pupils are absorbed in their learning. Pupils in all year groups work very well together to solve problems and are happy to challenge each other’s thinking and offer advice.
- Teachers have strong subject knowledge, high expectations and expect pupils to do their best. Teachers set tasks that are designed to engage and motivate pupils. For example, in geography, a Harry Potter theme was used to develop topographical understanding. Where teaching leads to good or better achievement, skilful questioning encourages pupils to develop deep understanding.
- However, teachers do not consistently set work at an appropriate level for pupils. In English, sometimes the most-able pupils have to complete work at lower levels before going on to more challenging tasks, and so do not make as much progress as they are capable of. In mathematics, the requirement for pupils to demonstrate mathematical reasoning is not consistent. Some written work in science shows that pupils are not always required to explain scientific ideas accurately.
- All subjects are supporting improvements in literacy through a strong focus on grammar and accurate use of vocabulary. The school’s work to develop pupils’ reading is effective. Pupils were keen to discuss their book choice with inspectors during their regular tutor-time reading session. During lessons, pupils are regularly encouraged to discuss their ideas before attempting to write them down. Many pupils were finding this helpful to clarify and sequence their thoughts.
- Teaching assistants, in lessons, make a very effective contribution to supporting pupils’ progress. Their questioning techniques skilfully support and challenge pupils’ thinking and learning. They encourage independence, particularly for the pupils with visual impairment. Teaching assistants supporting pupils who speak English as an additional language had tailored their support so well that these pupils are making very rapid progress.
- There are examples of very effective teacher feedback to pupils in line with the school’s expectations. In these instances, pupils clearly understand what they have to do improve and act upon this feedback. However, there are instances when pupils are not clear enough about how well they are doing and how to improve because feedback is not precise enough. These inconsistencies exist across and within departments. Steps are under way to address this, using examples of feedback with high impact on pupils’ progress to model good practice.
- Homework is set in line with the school’s policy and is used to extend learning.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

is outstanding

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is outstanding.
- Strong relationships and the highly positive culture for learning across the school contributes to the pupils' growing self-assurance. All staff work effectively to encourage pupils' resilience. Pupils are prepared to work hard to achieve their goals.
- Pupils are proud of their school. They enjoy coming to school and participate well in the extensive range of opportunities to develop academically, socially and personally. There is a strong emphasis on emotional well-being throughout the school. Pupils take on leadership roles as mentors to those who need additional support. The school provides strong support for pupils who are young carers.
- Pupils and parents say that the school is a safe place, bullying is very rare and they know whom they can talk to if they have any concerns. On the occasions when arguments or bullying do occur, pupils report that the process of restorative justice resolves problems well.
- Pupils are taught very effectively about keeping safe, including internet safety, and a number of staff are well trained in identifying any potential radicalisation. Inspectors observed pupils fascinated during an assembly on the potential dangers of social media.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is outstanding. Both in lessons and when moving around the school, pupils are calm and sensible. Pupils are keen to learn, polite, courteous and friendly towards each other, staff and visitors. They are proud of their school and look after it well. There is an atmosphere of mutual trust and respect.
- Attendance is above the national average. The school carefully monitors the attendance of all groups of pupils and promptly follows up absence. As a result, attendance is improving and the number of pupils who are frequently absent continues to reduce and is very low.
- Parents, staff and pupils all agree that behaviour is managed very well at the school. There are very few incidents of poor behaviour. Rates of exclusion are well below national levels.
- The small number of pupils who attend alternative provision are well cared for, and regular reviews and updates are provided on the progress these pupils are making.

Outcomes for pupils

are good

- Since the school became an academy, outcomes have improved strongly. Typically, pupils start Year 7 with attainment at or a little higher than national averages. By the time they reach the end of Year 11, the proportion of pupils achieving five good GCSEs including English and mathematics is well above the national average. The proportion of pupils achieving the highest grades has increased.
- Disadvantaged pupils achieve well and their attainment is improving. The gap between their outcomes and that of other pupils nationally is closing. Although progress is generally good, in some year groups disadvantaged pupils are not keeping up with other pupils in the school.
- Pupils with special educational needs or disability are supported well. By the end of Key Stage 4, they make the same good progress as others in the school.
- Pupils work hard and want to do well in all their subjects. A large proportion of current pupils make greater progress than that which is expected of them, across a range of subjects. However, due to some inconsistent teaching, some pupils in some classes are not achieving as well as they might. This is not confined to particular groups of pupils, although the most-able pupils are not consistently challenged.
- Individual records confirm that the very small number of pupils educated off site make good progress in the specialist provision they attend.
- Reading is strongly promoted in the school. Regular silent reading sessions during tutor time encourage pupils to read more widely. During lessons, pupils read a wide range of text out loud with confidence. Small-group interventions for pupils who find reading difficult help them to gain confidence and improve their reading skills.
- Pupils who arrive from primary school needing to catch up with English and mathematics participate in a transition group which helps them rapidly improve.

- Pupils are well prepared for progression in their next stage of life in work or education. All pupils who left the school in 2015 were enrolled on education or training courses or obtained jobs with training for September 2015.

School details

Unique reference number	125270
Local authority	Surrey
Inspection number	10005571

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

Type of school	Secondary comprehensive
School category	Academy converter
Age range of pupils	11–16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	1,177
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Zamir Tehal
Headteacher	Jane Abbott
Telephone number	01483 888447
Website	www.wokinghigh.surrey.sch.uk
Email address	info@wokinghigh.surrey.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Information about this school

- Woking High School is larger than the average secondary school.
- The school converted to an academy on 1 September 2013. When the predecessor school, of the same name, was inspected by Ofsted in March 2012, it was judged to be good.
- The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for support through the pupil premium is below the national average. Pupil premium funding is additional government funding for pupils known to be eligible for free school meals and children who are looked after by the local authority.
- A higher than average number of pupils are from minority ethnic backgrounds. The proportion of pupils who speak English as an additional language is above average.
- The proportion of pupils with special educational needs or disability is broadly average. The proportion of pupils with statements of special educational needs or education, health and care plans is above the national average. The school has a special unit with places for up to nine visually impaired pupils, seven of which are currently filled.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards that set minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress in English and mathematics.
- A very small number of pupils currently receive education off site. They follow a programme of learning provided by North West Surrey Short Stay School Pyrford Centre, Surrey Access to Education, St Peter's Medical Short Stay School, Stanhope-Seta Ltd and the Military Preparation College Farnborough.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 38 lessons, 11 jointly with school leaders. The lead inspector also visited 11 classes with the headteacher or deputy headteacher
- Meetings were held with pupils, the headteacher, senior and middle leaders, newly appointed staff, three governors and a representative of the local authority. The lead inspector spoke to the Chair of the Governing Body on the telephone.
- Inspectors looked at a range of pupils' work, observed pupils' behaviour in lessons, around the school and at lunchtime, and talked informally with staff and pupils.
- Inspectors considered the views of parents, taking into account the 77 responses on Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View. Inspectors also considered the 71 free-text responses and four letters submitted by parents. Responses to the 88 online questionnaires completed by staff and 126 by pupils were also taken into account.
- Inspectors scrutinised a range of documents, including those associated with safeguarding, behaviour and attendance, progress information of current pupils, minutes of meetings of the governing body, the school's evaluation of its own performance and improvement plans.

Inspection team

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