

Woodham Academy

Washington Crescent, Newton Aycliffe, County Durham DL5 4AX

Inspection dates

9–10 May 2018

Overall effectiveness	Good
Effectiveness of leadership and management	Good
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Good
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Good
Outcomes for pupils	Good
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Requires improvement

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school

- The headteacher and governors share their determination to promote all pupils' personal development. They provide high-quality opportunities for pupils to achieve very well.
- Staff are motivated to do their best for all pupils. They value their professional development and are making a difference to the lives of their pupils. As a result, the school is improving.
- Leaders check pupils' progress closely. They provide additional help when pupils need extra support with their learning or well-being.
- Leaders ensure that the curriculum offers a broad range of learning experiences that meet pupils' needs. A range of visits out of school and after-school clubs enrich pupils' wider learning.
- Pupils are proud of their school. They pride themselves on their positive attitudes to learning and the good progress they make across their subjects.
- A small proportion of pupils do not attend regularly enough, despite the considerable efforts of the school to help them to do so.
- Pupils behave well at school. They get on well with each other and adults. Pupils are cared for very well by staff. Pupils trust staff to help them if they have a worry or concern.
- Pupils develop a good understanding of the world around them and how to keep safe. Pupils show respect for others who have different backgrounds and beliefs to their own.
- Teachers have strong subject knowledge. They plan lessons carefully. They have high expectations of pupils' conduct and work. Teachers' positive relationships support pupils to make strong progress in their learning.
- Occasionally, teachers miss opportunities to stretch pupils' thinking and understanding. Sometimes, they miss opportunities to correct errors in spelling and grammar.
- Governors support leaders effectively. They ensure that resources are used well. Governors are well informed. They challenge leaders continuously to provide the best possible care and education for all pupils.
- Leaders are beginning to share expertise with schools within the multi-academy trust.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of teaching, learning and assessment further by:
 - using teacher questioning consistently to stretch pupils' thinking and deepen their understanding
 - developing pupils' writing skills in order for them to capture their responses and ideas with accurate spelling and grammar.
- Continue the school's work to sustain and extend the improvement in attendance achieved so far and reduce persistent absence rates further by developing strategies to work with families, pupils and external teams and agencies.
- Continue to develop the quality of leadership and management by sharing and contributing to the wider expertise in teaching, learning and assessment of the multi-academy trust which the school has recently joined.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Good

- The headteacher shares with governors her vision for high-quality personal development and high levels of achievement for pupils, irrespective of their starting points, in a safe and calm environment.
- Staff are motivated by leaders' determination and are committed to pupils' learning and welfare. Staff appreciate their opportunities for professional development, developing their skills effectively to keep pupils safe and help them learn well. They feel valued. Pupils agree wholeheartedly that they learn well and are cared for well. They are ambitious for their futures. As a consequence, the school is improving.
- The school has very recently joined a local multi-academy trust. As yet, there have been few opportunities for governors, leaders and teaching staff to share and benefit from their respective areas of expertise.
- The leadership of teaching, learning and assessment is a strength of the school. Leaders use information from their checks on the quality of teaching and pupils' progress to make further improvements in teachers' practice.
- Leaders provide both whole-school and personalised opportunities for staff to sharpen their teaching skills. The school's arrangements for performance management are closely linked to staff training and development. As a result, the quality of teaching continues to improve, creating a very largely consistent approach to teaching that supports pupils' progress effectively. Leaders recognise that there is more to do to increase further teachers' consistent use of challenge to deepen pupils' learning and to improve the overall accuracy of pupils' written work.
- The leadership of pupils' personal development and welfare is a further strength of the school. Pupils develop their confidence as learners as they move through the school, trusting staff to help them in their learning and if they have a difficulty or concern.
- Focused efforts to improve attendance and reduce the proportion of pupils who do not attend regularly enough are increasingly successful. Pupils appreciate the effective behaviour systems leaders have developed.
- The personal, social, health and economic element of the curriculum helps keep pupils well. Leaders maintain a sharp focus on the effectiveness of this aspect of the school's work that contributes effectively to safeguarding pupils. Pupils develop the skills and attitudes that prepare them effectively for life as young adults in modern Britain and for their next steps in education and training.
- Leaders review the effectiveness of the school's curriculum regularly. They adapt the curriculum sensitively to meet the needs of pupils, engage them and maximise their opportunities to achieve well. Leaders ensure that pupils learn about a variety of employment sectors and routes into further education. The range of external qualifications is suitably varied to support pupils' aspirations.
- Leaders and governors make effective use of additional funding to promote and accelerate pupils' learning. Funding for pupils who have special educational needs is used effectively and supports their strong progress. Additional staffing in English in

Year 7, alongside personalised systematic approaches to individualised learning, successfully improves pupils' reading. As a consequence, pupils can access the wider curriculum more readily.

- Disadvantaged pupils are supported well through leaders' use of additional funding. Leaders carefully identify barriers to pupils' learning and provide additional opportunities to deepen and broaden their experiences, as well as ensuring that teaching across subjects is consistently strong.
- Leaders support the ambitions of the sports academy to develop high-level skills across a range of disciplines. As well as developing their sporting prowess, participating pupils attend school well and, overall, make better progress than others in the school. A significant proportion of sports academy participants come from disadvantaged backgrounds.

Governance of the school

- Governors have a detailed knowledge of the school's strengths and areas for further development. They illustrate their ambition for all pupils in the school by ensuring that they are well informed about the pupils' day-to-day experiences and school performance, so that they are able to challenge and support leaders effectively.
- Governors use their skills to analyse and evaluate pupils' performance effectively to focus challenge to school leaders and support changes in the curriculum or the deployment of staff.
- Governors check regularly that the school's plans for development are leading to substantial improvements.
- Governors plan with senior leaders the spending of additional funds to support disadvantaged pupils and those who entered the school below the expected standard.
- Governors ensure that performance management and professional development arrangements are used to sustain and further improve practice.
- Governors ensure that they employ appropriate staff to develop the school further and keep pupils safe.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- Governors and leaders ensure that all the appropriate pre-employment checks on staff are made and recorded to ensure that only suitable adults work with pupils.
- Leaders responsible for safeguarding and all staff are trained well. They know how to recognise the signs of abuse and neglect. They are vigilant and know how to make prompt referrals. This supports leaders in ensuring that appropriate early help is provided quickly when it is needed.
- Leaders work with staff and other agencies to ensure that pupils have frequent opportunities to learn how to recognise and reduce risks to their well-being and safety.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Good

- Teachers use their strong subject knowledge and understanding of pupils' prior learning to plan lessons that interest and engage them. They have consistently high expectations of pupils' conduct during lessons. In response, pupils apply themselves to their learning and are keen to do as well as they can.
- Teachers make strong use of information on pupils' progress to plan lessons. They take care to devise activities that are almost always pitched accurately, given pupils' starting points and prior learning.
- The very positive relationships established between staff and pupils encourage their readiness to ask questions and contribute their ideas. As a result, pupils learn to work individually and in groups effectively. This positive learning climate contributes to the progress they make across a wide range of subjects.
- The effective teaching of reading, especially in Years 7 and 8, makes a strong contribution to pupils' ability to access the wider curriculum of the school. The great majority of pupils who receive additional focused support for reading and who entered the school with low attainment scores improve their reading ages very rapidly.
- Pupils take note of teachers' advice and are willing to try to improve their learning. Work in pupils' books is generally very well presented, and pupils are proud of their learning and achievements. However, occasionally, teachers do not point out errors of spelling or grammar that impair the quality of pupils' work.
- Pupils make effective use of the homework tasks that staff set them to consolidate their skills and knowledge and deepen their understanding. Some pupils choose to complete homework at school in the learning resources centre, where staff are on hand to support and guide. This reflects staff members' expectations of pupils to work with positive attitudes, and their willingness to provide extra support for pupils.
- Pupils develop their subject knowledge, skills and understanding well because teachers check for errors through their questioning. However, teachers miss some opportunities to use pupils' responses to their questions to adapt learning activities and to challenge pupils to move forward quickly when they are ready to do so.
- Pupils are able to discuss their learning. Most pupils are keen to find out new information and know what they have to do to achieve their best. Pupils do not waste learning time in the classroom. Rather, they enjoy their learning with peers and teachers.
- Low-level disruption to learning is rare. When needed, staff, including those in the behaviour and welfare team, are adept at enabling pupils to consider their actions and reflect on how they might manage their learning and behaviour better in the future.

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good.
- Pupils say they are cared for well by staff and feel safe in school. They have confidence in trusted members of staff to help them if they have a concern or are worried. Under the care and guidance of staff, pupils grow in confidence as young people as they prepare for the next steps in their education and training. Pupils depend to some degree on staff to help and guide them to learn, but are, nevertheless, keen to apply themselves. Pupils have consistently positive attitudes to learning. This contributes effectively to the good progress they make.
- Pupils learn how to keep safe when they use the internet and other digital technologies. They understand the risks and dangers associated with the use of social networking sites. They know what to do to minimise risks. Pupils learn, too, about positive relationships, as well as the risks associated with the misuse of alcohol and drugs. This helps to keep them safe.
- Pupils demonstrate respect for each other and the adults around them in their everyday interactions with one another. The respect and consideration they show for others characterise their acceptance and enjoyment of people from different cultures, beliefs and family backgrounds to their own.
- Pupils understand that bullying in any form is unacceptable. They know that it is not tolerated in school and, even though it is rare, they are convinced that, when it does happen, it is dealt with promptly by staff. Leaders ensure that pupils know they can turn to any trusted member of staff for help should they need it. Leaders ensure that pupils have opportunities to learn about the harm that can be caused by bullying based on discrimination, as part of their work to promote diversity and equality.
- A large proportion of pupils attend extra-curricular clubs regularly. For example, pupils enjoy high-quality additional coaching in a range of sports. Their commitment and determination to excel are often reflected in higher levels of attendance and progress than of others in the school.
- Leaders ensure that the small number of pupils who are educated in alternative provisions are well cared for. These pupils improve their attendance considerably over time and re-engage with their education. As a result, overall, they are making good progress from their starting points on entry to the provisions.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good. They behave well throughout the day, across the range of their lessons and during breaks and lunchtime. Pupils' behaviour is characterised by their consideration for others and the positive, lively conversations with each other and staff in their free time.
- Pupils arrive at school promptly and are ready to learn from the start of the day. They move sensibly and safely from lesson to lesson. Their attitudes to learning are consistently very positive. Pupils want to achieve and do as well as they can.

- The school's work to improve attendance is paying dividends. The absence rate has fallen overall and for groups of pupils so that attendance now closely matches the national average. The school's actions, including employing its own dedicated attendance officer, are now beginning to have a positive effect on the rate of persistent absenteeism. However, a small proportion of pupils are still reluctant to attend regularly enough, despite the school's increased efforts to support them and their families to do so. Leaders recognise that this area of the school's work remains an ongoing focus for action.

Outcomes for pupils

Good

- In 2017, pupils' attainment overall was above the national average. The progress made by pupils improved markedly from the previous year and, overall, was above the national average. Similarly, the progress made by disadvantaged pupils improved quickly and was well above the national average.
- The school maintained levels of achievement in English in 2017 and made significant improvements in achievement in mathematics. There remained some weaknesses in pupils' achievements in some subjects, such as modern foreign languages and core and additional science.
- Overall, pupils currently in the school are making strong progress from their starting points across key stages 3 and 4 and across a broad range of subjects. Pupils are now making much faster progress in core and additional science and in modern foreign languages than was the case in recent years. The overall improvements seen in 2017 in pupils' achievement are being sustained and extended this year.
- The most able pupils at key stage 4 are making strong progress towards their targets. A significant proportion of pupils in this group had prior attainment levels that brought them just into this group. Disadvantaged pupils in the higher prior-attaining group make very similar progress to others. Careful planning by teachers provides them with ample opportunities to develop knowledge and understanding, and practise skills to support high levels of achievement in their examinations.
- At key stage 4, disadvantaged pupils, often from lower prior attainment starting points, are making strong progress. Their current achievement is close to that of others in the school. Strong relationships and wider opportunities provided through sport and visits motivate and engage this group. Their current good progress sets them well on track to match and exceed last year's positive progress scores.
- Boys, in both key stages 3 and 4, are quickly improving their learning. Across year groups and subjects, boys are making slightly better progress than girls. Both boys and girls have positive overall scores against the school's demanding targets. This reflects teachers' focus on planning activities that best meet the needs of different groups of pupils.
- Pupils across key stages 3 and 4 who have special educational needs (SEN) and/or disabilities make strong progress from their starting points, because their needs are well known and managed. As a result, staff know how to help them learn and develop the skills they need to achieve well.
- Pupils in key stage 3 are making strong progress from their various starting points.

There is little difference between the progress made by disadvantaged pupils and others. Pupils in Year 7 have settled to learning quickly and are accelerating their progress as they go through the year. Pupils who receive additional support for literacy and numeracy in Year 7 quickly begin to achieve well. They make particularly strong gains in their reading. In 2017, pupils in this group increased their reading ages over nine months by an average of two and a half years.

- Inspectors noted swift progress in each year group and across subjects, both during lessons and in the wide sample of pupils' books. Consistently positive progress characterised pupils' learning. As a consequence, pupils are well prepared for the next steps in their education and training.

School details

Unique reference number	138717
Local authority	Durham
Inspection number	10048291

This inspection of the school 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 to 16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	710
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair	Sean Barnett
Headteacher	Christine Forsyth
Telephone number	01325 300 328
Website	www.woodham.org.uk
Email address	info@woodham.org.uk
Date of previous inspection	March 2016

Information about this school

- Woodham Academy is slightly smaller than the average secondary school. It provides education for boys and girls between 11 and 16 years of age. The large majority of pupils come from the local town, with a smaller proportion coming from other local towns and villages.
- The vast majority of pupils come from White British backgrounds. The proportion of pupils who come from disadvantaged backgrounds is higher than average. Overall, pupils enter the school with prior attainment levels that are slightly below the national average. The proportion of pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities is below the national average.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards for pupils' achievement.
- The school joined the Eden Learning Trust, a small local multi-academy trust, in May 2018. The Eden Learning Trust is governed by a board of directors. Day-to-day governance of the school is provided by the local governing body.

- Shortly after the previous inspection, leaders with specific responsibilities for teaching, learning and assessment and for music, appointed before the previous inspection, took up their posts. The school has appointed its own education welfare officer. The headteacher and governors have reorganised the structure and responsibilities of the senior leadership team.
- The school makes use of Durham local authority home and hospital services for pupils who are unable to attend school for medical reasons.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors held meetings with groups of pupils from across the school, talked with many more informally during the inspection and heard some younger pupils read.
- Inspectors visited lessons across both key stages and across a wide range of subjects. They spoke with pupils about their learning and examined a large sample of pupils' books and files.
- A wide range of school documents and records were examined, including the school's records of pupils' progress, behaviour and attendance and information about how the school safeguards pupils. Inspectors also considered the school's plans for further improvement.
- Meetings were held with a range of senior and middle leaders, other staff, including non-teaching staff, and the headteacher. Inspectors also met with the chair and another member of the local governing body and the chief executive officer of the Eden Learning Trust.
- Inspectors took into account the responses of parents and carers to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, and those of staff members in their survey.

Inspection team

Chris Campbell, lead inspector	Ofsted Inspector
Joanne Owens	Ofsted Inspector
Carl Sugden	Ofsted Inspector
Erica Hiorns	Ofsted Inspector

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In the report, 'disadvantaged pupils' refers to those pupils who attract government pupil premium funding: pupils claiming free school meals at any point in the last six years and pupils in care or who left care through adoption or another formal route. www.gov.uk/pupil-premium-information-for-schools-and-alternative-provision-settings.

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Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

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