

Woodlands Academy

Pinewood Crescent, Grimsby, Lincolnshire DN33 1RJ

Inspection dates

3–4 October 2018

Overall effectiveness	Inadequate
Effectiveness of leadership and management	Requires improvement
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Inadequate
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Requires improvement
Outcomes for pupils	Inadequate
Early years provision	Inadequate
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is an inadequate school

- Historic weaknesses in leadership, including governance, have led to a significant fall in standards. Current leaders have halted this decline and are at the early stages of improving the quality of teaching.
- Teachers often lack crucial subject knowledge. Their explanations do not support pupils' learning effectively. Too often, pupils receive work which is not matched to their needs. Therefore, their progress is hindered.
- Shortcomings in teaching have led to pupils having significant gaps in their mathematics and English skills and knowledge.
- Pupils' outcomes across the school reflect considerable underachievement. However, unvalidated results for pupils in Year 6 in 2018 show some improvement. This is testimony to the recent changes that leaders have implemented.
- The proportion of pupils who are regularly absent from school is too high.
- Significant inaccuracies in the assessment of children in the early years means that activities do not present sufficient challenge. As a result, children make limited progress and they enter Year 1 lacking the knowledge and skills they need.
- Many senior and middle leaders are new to their roles. They have implemented appropriate changes, but it is too early for them to check what difference they have made.
- Until recently, pupils were not always taught the full range of curriculum subjects. Consequently, they have wide gaps in their knowledge and skills and they are not well prepared for life in modern Britain.
- Pupils' attitudes to learning are positive overall. However, they often become off-task in lessons when they are unsure what to do, or when their work is either too easy or too difficult.

The school has the following strengths

- The new headteacher and her recently established leadership team are accurate in identifying priorities. They have had some early success in improving the quality of teaching.
- Leaders have created a nurturing ethos within the school and have improved pupils' behaviour. Pupils are confident, mature and demonstrate well-developed social skills.

Full report

In accordance with section 44(2) of the Education Act 2005, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector is of the opinion that this school requires significant improvement, because it is performing significantly less well than it might in all the circumstances reasonably be expected to perform.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Urgently improve teaching so that it is consistently good or better and results in rapid progress for pupils by:
 - eradicating weak teaching
 - improving teachers' subject knowledge in mathematics and English
 - ensuring that teachers are skilled in making accurate assessments of pupils' starting points
 - ensuring that teachers use these assessments to plan purposeful and challenging activities that extend pupils' learning
 - making sure that phonics teaching is effective in enabling pupils to develop early reading skills rapidly
 - providing pupils with books to practise their early reading which are matched tightly to their reading abilities.
- Improve the effectiveness of leadership and management by:
 - taking urgent action to eradicate weak teaching
 - continuing to raise the expectations of teaching staff with regards to what pupils can achieve
 - developing the roles of middle leaders to enable them to lead improvements in their areas of responsibility
 - ensuring that senior and middle leaders check provision thoroughly in their areas of responsibility and secure essential improvements in teaching
 - making sure that leaders support and challenge teachers effectively about pupils' progress
 - creating a sustainable, effective governance structure with members who hold leaders rigorously to account for the school's performance
 - ensuring that teaching in wider curriculum subjects enables pupils to build knowledge, skills and understanding consistently across all subjects
 - ensuring that pupils are better prepared for life in modern Britain through improvements to the teaching of RE and improved provision for pupils' cultural and spiritual development.
- Improve the effectiveness of the early years by ensuring that:
 - leaders secure improvements in teaching, learning and assessment so that teaching is consistently good

- leaders check the effect of improvement strategies on children’s progress
 - all adults are skilled in accurately assessing children in all areas of learning
 - adults use assessment information to match activities to children’s needs, ensuring an appropriate level of challenge
 - outdoor provision is strengthened to enable children to develop their knowledge and skills in all areas of learning.
- Improve further pupils’ rates of attendance and urgently reduce the proportion of pupils who are regularly absent from the school.
 - Improve pupils’ behaviour by:
 - setting tasks and activities that enable pupils to focus more consistently in lessons
 - ensuring that staff consistently apply school policies and procedures to address any incidents of bullying.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Requires improvement

- The school has experienced a period of significant turbulence over the last few years and has faced the challenges presented by changes in school leadership and weaknesses in the previous trust. Current leaders have been effective in halting a serious decline in the standard of education. They are honest and accurate in their evaluations of the school's performance and they fully understand the scale of the task ahead of them.
- The new headteacher has acted swiftly to engage support from local and specialist leaders of education. She has already started working with the academy trust the school is going to join, as she knows that improvements are urgently needed. A new leadership structure has been introduced, which has brought new executive, deputy and assistant headteachers to the school. These strategic moves have been effective in ensuring that the school has the sustainable leadership capacity it requires to effect improvements in priority areas, such as in the early years.
- Leaders are in the process of ensuring that all staff have suitably high expectations of what pupils can achieve. Most members of staff are motivated, are on board with leaders' vision for the school and demonstrate commitment and enthusiasm. They appreciate the opportunities for professional development they have received recently and can see the early signs of improvement in teaching and learning.
- Although the overall quality of teaching is inadequate, leaders have been successful in securing improvements to teaching in upper key stage 2. This has led to improved outcomes for pupils in Year 6 in 2018.
- Leaders have introduced clear approaches for staff to follow for teaching writing, reading and phonics. Where these approaches are being implemented effectively, pupils' gaps in their basic knowledge and skills are being filled rapidly. However, for too many pupils, the teaching they receive is not effective in supporting them to make progress and catch up.
- A new approach to teaching mathematics was introduced in 2017. Many of the teachers who were trained in delivering this approach have since left the school. As a result, teaching in this subject is particularly weak. Leaders have plans in place to provide professional development for staff to tackle this priority.
- Leaders have introduced a new assessment system to establish pupils' starting points in English and mathematics. They have begun to hold teachers to account for pupils' outcomes. They have introduced systems to check pupils' progress and the quality of teaching they receive. However, these new systems have been introduced very recently and, therefore, the difference they make to pupils' outcomes is not evident.
- The special educational needs coordinator is new to the role. Support for pupils who have special educational needs (SEN) and/or disabilities has not been effective in recent times, because of the lack of leadership capacity during the last academic year. This has meant that communication with outside agencies has slowed, and some pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities have not received the support they need quickly.

enough. Pupils have individual targets and additional teaching sessions where appropriate. However, leaders have not checked on the effectiveness of these sessions.

- Until recently, pupils have not been taught a broad and balanced curriculum. This has left significant gaps in their knowledge, skills and understanding. Current leaders are taking swift action to address this, and have systems in place to check that pupils are now taught the full range of subjects. One legacy of this historic weakness is that pupils' spiritual and cultural development has been hindered. Pupils have limited knowledge of religions, culture and diversity, which means that they are not well prepared for life in modern Britain.
- Leaders have established a nurturing culture within the school where pupils' well-being and personal development are prioritised and the climate for learning is positive. Provision for pupils' social and moral development is very strong. As a result, pupils are happy and confident, and a calm atmosphere exists in the school.
- Leaders use pupil premium funding to provide additional teaching sessions for disadvantaged pupils. This has resulted in accelerated progress for some disadvantaged pupils. However, like other pupils in the school, they do not reach the attainment levels of which they are capable because they have experienced weak teaching over time. Disadvantaged pupils benefit from subsidised educational visits and support from pastoral staff. This pastoral support has been effective in improving the attendance of some pupils.
- The primary physical education (PE) and sport funding has been used effectively to raise standards in the teaching of PE. The school employs specialist coaches to enhance PE lessons and train teachers. Pupils benefit from joining a range of after-school clubs and by competing in tournaments.

Governance of the school

- The school is currently being governed by an interim executive board. Prior to this arrangement, governance was weak and leaders were not held to account for the school's performance. As a result, trustees presided over a period of significant decline in the quality of teaching and in pupils' outcomes.
- The members of the interim executive board have a suitable range of expertise and are fully aware of their legal responsibilities. They are realistic about the school's current position and have a clear understanding of the priorities.
- Leaders and board members have been prudent in their approach to re-brokering the school to a new sponsor. Although it is early days, the executive board is checking that leaders are taking effective action to reverse the decline in standards.
- Board members are in the process of formulating plans to create a local governing body. They have already recruited associate governors who have appropriate skills and knowledge. They are mindful of the need to transfer responsibilities carefully so that governors are fully equipped to challenge leaders and contribute to shaping the school's strategic direction.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- Leaders have appropriate systems in place to ensure that pupils are kept safe. Staff have regular training updates to ensure that they are well equipped to identify vulnerable pupils. Where referrals to designated staff or outside agencies are necessary, adults take prompt action. The records they keep in relation to this are detailed and well organised.
- The school has a highly effective Families and Community Team, which provides crucial pastoral support for pupils and their families. Strong relationships exist between pupils and staff, and all pupils spoken to said they had a trusted adult with whom they could share any concerns.
- Leaders follow up pupil absences rigorously to ensure that pupils are safe. Their records on pupils' attendance are comprehensive. However, leaders are fully aware that improving pupils' attendance remains a crucial priority.
- Leaders carry out appropriate checks on the suitability of staff working with pupils when making appointments and their records are well maintained.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Inadequate

- The quality of teaching in too many year groups, particularly in key stage 1, has been weak over time. Some teachers are not accurate in recognising their pupils' starting points. Too often, teachers' expectations of what pupils can achieve are too low. As a result, pupils frequently receive work which is too easy, and which fails to extend their learning. This has prevented pupils from making the progress they are capable of in reading, writing and mathematics.
- In mathematics, some teachers lack essential subject knowledge, which means that their explanations confuse pupils. They often fail to address pupils' misconceptions and sometimes add to them. A significant proportion of pupils lack the basic knowledge of numbers expected for their age and, therefore, find difficulty in calculating. The most able pupils are not challenged, and their learning is not extended. Pupils are rarely taught how to apply their learning to reasoning or problem-solving contexts.
- Over time, the teaching of phonics has been weak. Leaders have recently introduced a new approach, which is showing signs of early improvements in this area. However, the books pupils are given to practise their early reading skills are not matched to their phonic knowledge and contain words which they cannot read. Additionally, pupils do not have regular opportunities to read to an adult in the school. As a result, pupils do not develop early reading skills as quickly or as well as they should.
- The gaps pupils have in their early reading skills also slow their learning in other subjects. Pupils, particularly in key stage 1, sometimes cannot complete activities in wider curriculum subjects because they cannot read the resources teachers have given them.
- Leaders are introducing new approaches to develop pupils' reading comprehension skills. While some pupils are now being taught to read with increasing understanding,

these approaches are not being consistently implemented and variance in pupils' comprehension remains.

- Leaders are introducing new structures to help teachers plan writing lessons more effectively. As a result, some teachers are addressing gaps in pupils' grammar, punctuation and spelling more closely. Pupils are being given opportunities to apply their learning to extended pieces, which they draft, edit and improve. However, the quality of the teaching of writing is variable across the school and too much remains ineffective.
- Teaching in wider curriculum subjects has been weak over time. This has left pupils with very little knowledge and limited subject-specific skills. It is too early to see any positive impact from the new approach which leaders have very recently introduced. For example, in RE lessons, teachers now design activities to stimulate pupils' reflection and group discussion. However, pupils do not have the knowledge needed to participate in any meaningful thought or debate.
- The atmosphere in most classrooms is calm. However, very few classes demonstrate any urgency, purpose or productivity for learning. It is usual for pupils to wait for extended periods for their next activity. This leads to pupils' concentration regularly drifting. They frequently choose to chat to their friends rather than doing their work, and this often goes unchallenged by adults.
- Some teaching assistants show skills in leading groups of pupils and engaging pupils effectively. However, this does not always lead to pupils making progress or becoming independent in their learning.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Requires improvement

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare requires improvement.
- Pupils are confident and have well-developed social skills. Leaders have prioritised pupils' personal development, and positive relationships exist between staff and pupils. As a result, pupils are welcoming, friendly and show high levels of maturity.
- Leaders regularly present assemblies on topics such as honesty and tolerance, as well as a religious focus. This has ensured that pupils understand the importance of showing respect to everyone. However, due to the inconsistent teaching of RE, pupils are not equipped with the knowledge of different faiths and cultures they need to be able to put their good intentions into practice in a meaningful way.
- There is a strong ethos of caring, nurture and consideration for others within the school. Pupils whose circumstances make them vulnerable are well supported by highly skilled pastoral staff. External agencies, such as a therapeutic counsellor, are used where appropriate to ensure that pupils' emotional needs are met.
- Pupils understand the importance of being healthy and know that diet and exercise contribute to this. They enjoy PE lessons, which are led by specialist coaches, and

appreciate the range of extra-curricular activities which are on offer. Some pupils also benefit from starting the day with a nutritious meal at the school's breakfast club.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils requires improvement.
- The pastoral team has been successful in supporting staff to manage pupils' behaviour more effectively. Staff and pupils agree that pupils' behaviour is much improved, because pupils take increasing responsibility for their choices. During the inspection, pupils were calm, orderly and respectful throughout the school day. This improvement is further illustrated by leaders' dramatic reduction of exclusion rates over the last academic year.
- Pupils say that some bullying occurs, and almost all pupils spoken to told inspectors that staff are effective in dealing with these occurrences. However, a small number of pupils recognise that some members of staff fail to spot repeated patterns of unkindness and are not effective in applying the school's policies in relation to this.
- Leaders have made a determined effort to reduce pupils' absence. Pupils were proud to receive raffle tickets and pin badges for 100% attendance rates, and they understand the importance of their education. Although still below average, overall attendance is steadily improving. Leaders are working more intensively to support families of those pupils who are regularly absent from school, but their actions in this regard have not been successful.

Outcomes for pupils

Inadequate

- Over time, weaknesses in teaching have left pupils with significant gaps in their English and mathematical knowledge and skills. As a result, pupils across the school have underachieved considerably.
- Following leaders' strengthening of the quality of teaching, learning and assessment in upper key stage 2, unvalidated 2018 results show some improvement in pupils' outcomes. At the end of key stage 2, pupils made stronger progress in reading and mathematics than in 2016 and 2017. The proportion of pupils reaching and exceeding the standard expected for their age was closer to the national average in all subjects. Despite these encouraging signs, pupils' attainment remains very low and only just over half of pupils left the school with the English and mathematics knowledge and skills they need for secondary education.
- Short-term intensive phonics teaching with Year 1 pupils in 2018 was effective in helping many pupils to catch up. Consequently, the proportion of pupils who reached the expected standard in the Year 1 phonics screening check increased and was close to the national average. However, for pupils currently in key stage 1 and the early years, the quality of phonics teaching is weak and does not enable them to develop their phonic knowledge well.
- In 2018, leaders secured accurate assessment information for pupils at the end of key stage 1. Due to the ineffective teaching pupils have received over time, only just over half of the pupils reached the expected standard in reading, writing and mathematics.

As a result, a significant proportion of pupils are not ready for the key stage 2 curriculum.

- Outcomes for disadvantaged pupils vary. Where they have received effective teaching, including additional sessions, they make accelerated progress and their attainment is stronger than their peers. However, for some disadvantaged pupils, their outcomes are limited by weaknesses in teaching.
- In line with other pupils in the school, the progress of pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities is determined by the quality of teaching they receive. Some pupils, particularly in upper key stage 2, make good progress and catch up on lost ground. However, for others their progress is hindered by inadequate teaching and they do not reach their potential. A similar picture is seen for all groups of pupils, including the most able.
- Leaders have made a concerted effort to increase pupils' motivation to read. Within classrooms and in communal areas, there are attractive libraries and spaces to read. Pupils, particularly those in key stage 2, speak positively about reading. Pupils across the school have been set a reading challenge, and this has been effective in increasing the number of pupils who read at home regularly.

Early years provision

Inadequate

- In recent years, there have been several changes in the leadership of early years and this instability has contributed to a decline in standards.
- Adults' assessments of children's skills are inaccurate and infrequent. When they observe children's learning, not all adults are precise in identifying their stage of development or their next steps. Therefore, leaders are not able to evaluate accurately whether children enter the early years with skills which are typical for their age.
- The shortcomings in adults' knowledge of assessment mean that they do not provide activities which meet children's needs. In the indoor classroom, there are a wealth of tasks which occupy children but do not support them in practising, developing and consolidating their skills. Children are kept busy, but their learning is not purposeful. As a result, children are compliant but lack a spark for learning.
- Leaders have made some improvements to the early years provision. For example, they have been successful in making the indoor classroom a colourful and organised space. However, they have been slow to effect improvements in relation to other identified priorities, such as the development of outdoor learning.
- Outdoor provision is underdeveloped, and activities do not stimulate all the areas of learning. Children do not have suitable opportunities to develop the characteristics they will need to become effective learners. The activities on offer reflect a distinct lack of challenge.
- Some adults recognise the importance of stimulating children's thinking and speaking. They model new vocabulary effectively. However, this is inconsistent across the early years. Too often, adult talk is not effective in moving children's learning on.

- Although some practice is more effective, overall, the teaching of phonics is weak in the early years. Children do not have sufficient opportunities to observe and practise sounds. Adults' expectations of what children can achieve are too low, and this has resulted in a lax approach to teaching. For example, children in Reception Class were only experiencing their fifth sound, despite having been in the school for four weeks. Mismatches between the sound being taught and the word being practised leave children confused and floundering. As a result, children leave the early years with significant gaps in their phonic knowledge.
- The inadequate teaching many children experience in the early years leaves them lagging behind their peers nationally. They are not well equipped for Year 1 and their future learning is impeded.
- Safeguarding in the early years is effective and the welfare requirements are met. Adults have positive relationships with children and their parents and carers. Leaders place a suitable emphasis on nurturing and caring for the children.

School details

Unique reference number	142565
Local authority	North East Lincolnshire
Inspection number	10053515

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Academy converter
Age range of pupils	3 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	354
Appropriate authority	Interim executive board
Chair	Roger Moore
Headteacher	Rachel Green
Telephone number	01472500900
Website	www.woodlands.ne-lincs.sch.uk
Email address	head@woodlands.academy
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Information about this school

- Woodlands Primary Academy is a larger-than-average-sized primary school which has a nursery for children from the age of three.
- The school became an academy in January 2016. With two other primary schools, it became part of the New Dawn Trust, which was renamed the Link Education Trust in September 2017. This trust ceased to operate in December 2017. The school is currently in the process of being re-brokered to the Healing Multi-Academy Trust.
- Support for the school has been provided by the Healing Multi-Academy Trust through the Humber Teaching School since February 2018.
- The school is currently being governed by an interim executive board and has plans to formulate a local governing body in the near future.
- Since the last inspection, and particularly in the last year, there have been significant changes in staffing, including in leadership roles.

- The proportion of disadvantaged pupils is almost double the national average.
- Most pupils are of White British heritage and a small number of pupils speak English as an additional language.
- The proportion of pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities is below average.
- The school runs a breakfast club for its pupils.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed learning across the school in a range of subjects. Many of these observations were carried out jointly with senior leaders.
- Discussions were held with senior and middle leaders, an associate governor, the chief executive officer of the Healing Multi-Academy Trust and a group of staff. A telephone conversation was held with the vice-chair of the interim executive board.
- Inspectors scrutinised pupils' work, talked to them about their learning and listened to them read. They observed pupils' behaviour in lessons and around the school, including at breakfast club, playtimes and lunchtimes. Inspectors sounded out pupils' opinions about the school through formal and informal discussions. They also took into account the 32 responses to Ofsted's pupil survey.
- Inspectors viewed a range of documentation, including the school's self-evaluation, the school's improvement plans, minutes of interim executive board meetings, safeguarding documents and monitoring records of the quality of teaching and learning. Inspectors also evaluated information relating to pupils' outcomes, behaviour and attendance.
- Inspectors took account of the opinions of parents at the start and end of the school day, as well as the three free-text responses which were submitted by parents through Ofsted's online questionnaire Parent View.
- Inspectors also considered the 14 responses to Ofsted's staff questionnaire.

Inspection team

Karine Hendley, lead inspector	Her Majesty's Inspector
Alison Aitchison	Her Majesty's Inspector
Gerry Wilson	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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