

Inspection of Woods Bank Academy

Rough Hay Road, Darlaston, Wednesbury, West Midlands WS10 8NQ

Inspection dates: 1 and 2 February 2022

Overall effectiveness

Requires improvement

The quality of education

Requires improvement

Behaviour and attitudes

Requires improvement

Personal development

Good

Leadership and management

Requires improvement

Early years provision

Requires improvement

Previous inspection grade

Good

What is it like to attend this school?

Community links are strong, and the school is a safe place for pupils. If staff have any concerns about pupils' welfare, then they tell the right people. This means that pupils get the right help when they need it. Pupils usually get on with others, but some pupils use unkind words or do things that cause upset. However, if any bullying happens, then staff stop it.

The disruption caused by the pandemic has unsettled some pupils. Currently, staff are providing extra support to help them get used to school again. This is starting to pay off, but there is more to do.

The school provides a broad curriculum. All pupils can take part in all that the school does. Indeed, the school is very inclusive and welcoming. From drumming workshops and dance festivals to exotic animals in school, plenty of fascinating things go on, with something for everyone. In addition, there are many school clubs, such as those for gardening, cooking and board games.

In class, some subjects are organised and taught better than others. In history, mathematics, and design and technology, pupils learn a lot. In some other subjects, including early reading and writing, there is room for improvement.

What does the school do well and what does it need to do better?

This is a very inclusive school. Whatever their abilities, all pupils are included in all the school does. From the start in Nursey, no one is left out, and staff work hard to help pupils settle into school. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities access the full curriculum and receive extra help when they need it.

Leaders have been quick to get the many extra activities, such as clubs, trips and visitors to school that were stopped during the pandemic, going again. There are many clubs that help to broaden pupils' interests. Lunchtime clubs, such as those for mindfulness and cookery, provide calm and productive activities away from the busy playground, and many pupils benefit from this. Support for pupils' personal development is a strength.

Subject leaders have set out what they want staff to cover in different subjects. They have given guidance to staff so that they know what to teach and when. In history and design and technology, for example, leaders and staff are forging ahead in their thinking and practice. However, in several subjects, they have not thought carefully enough about what they want pupils to remember or to be able to do. In religious education (RE), for example, staff tell pupils lots of facts about different religions but do not check that they understand the most important aspects. In physical education (PE), pupils are kept busy and active, but lessons do not necessarily focus on ways to improve a particular skill.

In some subjects, leaders and staff have not identified the key things that they want pupils to know and remember, nor found reliable ways to check that they do.

The school's approach to early reading and writing is a mix of strengths and weaknesses. In Nursery, songs, rhymes and repetition pave the way for phonics teaching in Reception. Once phonics teaching starts, the approach is hit or miss. Staff have good subject knowledge, but they use a home-grown approach that draws on different materials that do not match up. Leaders know that they need to make changes for the better, but have yet to make any firm decisions about what to do next. In addition, the approach to early writing does not promote good habits and leads to poor pencil grip and presentation.

On the other hand, mathematics is taught well. In this subject, staff follow a consistent approach and keep a close eye on pupils' progress.

Around the school, inside and out, most pupils are orderly and polite to adults. At times, some pupils say unkind words to other pupils. This can lead to upsets and disagreements. In response, most staff invest a lot of time in supporting pupils to learn from their mistakes and to build empathy. Even so, some staff let poor behaviour or attitudes go unchallenged. This needs to change.

The trust recognises the need to improve the school and has put additional support in place. This is steering the school in the right direction. It also gives school leaders important back-up when making changes for the better.

Staff work hard and say that leaders are mindful of their workload.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

The school is a safe place. Staff are well trained and know what to do if they have a concern. Leaders follow up concerns quickly and provide support for pupils and families when necessary. They share information with external agencies, as appropriate.

Pupils learn how to keep themselves safe, including when online. The curriculum helps pupils to understand local risks, for example by including teaching about safety around canals. Staff also teach pupils about healthy relationships and how they should behave towards others.

The required checks on adults in school are carried out correctly. Safeguarding policies are up to date.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Staff teach early reading and writing using a mix of different approaches that do not support one another as well as they might. Classroom teaching sessions vary in quality and pupils are not taught good letter formation and handwriting habits from the start. Leaders should review the approach to early reading and writing to ensure a consistent approach that builds competence, confidence, accuracy and fluency with greater success.
- In several subjects, including PE, RE, science and computing, leaders have not identified the important things that pupils need to know and remember. Similarly, teachers' and leaders' checks on learning do not necessarily check the right things. This means that they do not know enough about the quality of learning. Leaders should identify the most important knowledge that pupils need to remember in these subjects. Once they have done that, they should find efficient ways to check whether teaching is enabling pupils to know and remember these things.
- Among a substantial minority of pupils, behaviour and attitudes to school are not good. They find it hard to settle in class and can be rude to others. In response, staff work hard to improve things. Even so, some unkind words from pupils go unchecked. In addition, a significant proportion do not wear full school uniform, nor the right kit for PE. Staff accept this too readily. Leaders should continue to ensure that all staff take responsibility for correcting poor behaviour. They should also work with parents and carers to lift expectations for the way pupils dress for school.

How can I feed back my views?

You can use [Ofsted Parent View](#) to give Ofsted your opinion on your child's school, or to find out what other parents and carers think. We use information from Ofsted Parent View when deciding which schools to inspect, when to inspect them and as part of their inspection.

The Department for Education has further [guidance](#) on how to complain about a school.

If you are the school and you are not happy with the inspection or the report, you can [complain to Ofsted](#).

Further information

You can search for [published performance information](#) about the school.

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.

School details

Unique reference number	139305
Local authority	Walsall
Inspection number	10211005
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	393
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Caroline Whalley
Principal	Nicola Berkeley (Principal) Paul Edgerton (Executive Principal)
Website	www.woodsbank.org
Date of previous inspection	8 and 9 November 2016, under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The school is in the Elliot Foundation Academies Trust.
- Since the previous inspection, the school's name has changed from Rough Hay Primary School to Woods Bank Academy.
- The school does not use any alternative provision.

Information about this inspection

The inspectors carried out this inspection under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

This was the first routine inspection the school had received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. The inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with leaders, and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.

- During the inspection, the inspectors carried out deep dives in the following subjects: reading, mathematics, history, RE and PE. In these subjects, the inspectors discussed the curriculum with subject leaders, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers, spoke to some pupils about their learning and looked

at samples of pupils' work. The inspectors also looked at the curriculum in some other subjects in less detail to check how these were organised and taught.

- The inspectors noted 2019 performance data about the school and looked at school documents. These included information about behaviour, the school curriculum and improvement planning. They also checked the school's website.
- The inspectors asked pupils, staff, leaders and parents about the school's safeguarding arrangements and safety routines. The lead inspector examined the record of employment checks on school staff and looked at other school records.
- The inspectors observed pupils' behaviour in class, at lunchtime, on the playground and at other times during the day.
- During the inspection, the inspectors had formal meetings with the principal, other leaders, the chief executive officer of the Elliot Foundation Academies Trust, other trust leaders, school staff and pupils.
- Inspectors talked informally with pupils and staff to gather general information about school life. In addition, they took account of the responses to Ofsted's surveys of staff, pupil and parent views. One inspector spoke with some parents at the start of the school day.

Inspection team

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