

Inspection of Future Academies Watford

Horseshoe Lane, Garston, Watford, Hertfordshire WD25 7HW

Inspection dates: 28 and 29 June 2022

Overall effectiveness

Requires improvement

The quality of education

Requires improvement

Behaviour and attitudes

Requires improvement

Personal development

Good

Leadership and management

Requires improvement

Sixth-form provision

Good

Previous inspection grade

Requires improvement

What is it like to attend this school?

Many pupils at Future Academies Watford behave well around school and in lessons. However, there are a significant minority who do not. This impacts the learning of others.

Most pupils achieve well and enjoy their learning. Despite this, the individual needs of a significant proportion of pupils, particularly those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), are not supported well. This hampers their progress.

While behaviour in many lessons is calm, there is some low-level disruption. Where this happens, pupils find it difficult to learn. When bullying occurs, staff deal with it quickly. Pupils are generally respectful to each other. However, some use derogatory language. Leaders address this issue, but it persists within the school community.

Pupils access a wide variety of relevant activities across the arts, sports and music. Visitors talk to pupils about issues such as racism. Many pupils respond to incentives that are in place, such as badges for accumulating positive points. Pupils wear their badges with pride.

Sixth-form students are well prepared for their next steps through the support provided by staff. Students demonstrate mature approaches to learning and are good role models. For instance, they volunteer to support younger pupils to read.

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

Leaders and the trust provide a clear vision for the school. They have started to make improvements to the curriculum. The positive changes are better established in some subjects than in others. With trust support, leaders have been able to set out what pupils should learn and when they should learn it. Leaders have introduced a standard format to lessons across all subject areas. This approach, while consistent, does not routinely encourage teaching which supports learning for all pupils' needs. As the curriculum is new, leaders have not reviewed what works well and what needs to be better.

Leaders have developed the curriculum to improve the provision in modern foreign languages. This is supporting more pupils to study the core subjects that make up the English Baccalaureate (English, mathematics, science, history or geography and a language at GCSE).

Many pupils have gaps in their knowledge and understanding. These pupils are not able to make connections to apply to new learning. While work has been done to identify individual needs more accurately, this is still in the early stages of development. Too many pupils with SEND do not access a curriculum that meets their needs. They are not making the progress they should.

The sixth form is different. Leaders have ensured that the curriculum is ambitious. It is adapted to the needs of all students, including those students with SEND. Lessons are well planned. Teachers revisit prior learning and then build students' knowledge from a secure base. Students have positive attitudes towards their studies and talk positively about how they are supported well by teachers.

Pupils who are struggling to read do not get the right support. Teachers read to pupils during lessons. However, pupils are not given enough opportunity to read for themselves. For those pupils who struggle to read, books are not well matched to their reading knowledge. This is impacting on how well pupils access the curriculum.

A significant proportion of pupils' conduct falls below the required standard. Where this happens, pupils' learning is disrupted. Leaders identify that behaviour requires improvement. They have implemented a range of behaviour systems. While leaders' expectations around behaviour for learning are much higher than they previously were, they are not efficiently using the information that the new systems are providing them with. This is partly demonstrated by the high number of fixed-term exclusions within the school. Additionally, although leaders have put strategies into place to improve attendance following the pandemic, levels of persistent absence remain high.

Leaders have a well-sequenced and age-appropriate provision which effectively develops pupils' personal development. Lessons, assemblies and external visitors support pupils to understand the wider world. Pupils learn about different cultures and religions. They learn to respect differences. Pupils engage well with the wide range of opportunities leaders provide. They take part in trips and visits, the Duke of Edinburgh's Award scheme and learn to play musical instruments. The careers education programme provides pupils with effective guidance to support their next steps.

Teachers value the training and opportunities to share practice with each other. They say that leaders are considerate of their workload and well-being.

Governors understand their specific roles and how these fit into the trust's governance structure.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders have ensured that all staff have received training and fully understand their responsibilities regarding safeguarding. Staff are confident and clear in reporting safeguarding concerns.

Governors regularly review and evaluate systems in place, which ensures they carry out their statutory duties.

Appropriate checks are carried out on new staff before they work in the school.

Leaders' 'respect' initiative provides a channel for pupils to report concerns. Leaders work with other agencies where needed.

Pupils are aware of how to stay safe through assemblies, lessons and external visitors. They are supported through age-appropriate contexts. Leaders have responded quickly to support pupils as local needs have arisen.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- The needs of pupils with SEND are not currently well met. Leaders must continue to develop the curriculum and provide training to staff to ensure that adaptations can be made to meet the needs of individual pupils. This will enable pupils with SEND to build their knowledge and skills so they successfully access the curriculum and achieve well.
- Support for those who struggle to read is not effective. Pupils are not given opportunities to improve their reading knowledge. Pupils struggle to access the rest of the curriculum. Leaders need to develop a systematic phonics-based programme to support pupils with the knowledge that they need to become fluent readers. This in turn will improve pupils' opportunities to learn well in the rest of the curriculum.
- While leaders have recently reviewed their approach to behaviour management, the information they are gathering from the reviewed systems that they have put in place is not improving all behaviours. For example, there is a significant proportion of pupils that exhibit behaviours that are unacceptable. Leaders need to look closely at the information they gather and use this more rigorously to improve behaviours across the 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	135876
Local authority	Hertfordshire
Inspection number	10212347
Type of school	Secondary
School category	Academy sponsor-led
Age range of pupils	11 to 18
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in sixth-form provision	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	1,111
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	103
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	John Nash
Principal	Debbie Warwick
Website	www.watford.futureacademies.org
Date of previous inspection	26 and 27 March 2019, under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- Future Academies Watford joined the Future Academies Trust in 2020. Previously, it was known as Francis Combe Academy.
- The school meets the requirements of the Baker Clause, which requires schools to provide pupils in Years 8 to 13 with information about approved technical education qualifications and apprenticeships.
- Leaders use registered alternative provisions.

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 received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. Inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with leaders

and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.

- Inspectors met with the principal and senior leaders. The lead inspector met with four members of the local governing board and a trustee who is the chief executive officer.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives into six subjects: science, art, Latin, Spanish, history and English. For each subject area, inspectors discussed the curriculum with subject leaders, visited lessons with senior leaders and members of the trust's curriculum team, spoke to teachers and pupils and reviewed samples of pupils' work.
- Inspectors met with several groups of pupils, including single-sex groups. They talked about the quality of education in the school, as well as other aspects of school life.
- Inspectors met with groups of teachers, including those in their early years of teaching, and support staff.
- Inspectors spoke to leaders responsible for pupils with SEND and literacy across the school. Inspectors visited lessons with a focus on pupils with SEND with leaders. An inspector also listened to a selection of pupils read.
- Inspectors held discussions with leaders, trustees, pupils and staff to explore how effectively pupils are safeguarded. Records relating to safeguarding, including pre-employment checks carried out before staff are appointed, were looked at.
- The lead inspector reviewed a range of policies, improvement plans, the school's self-evaluation, the school's website and published information about the school's performance.
- The lead inspector spoke to a leader at the main provider of alternative provision.
- Inspectors noted the 158 responses to the online Ofsted Parent View survey and the 152 free-text comments from parents. They also considered the 75 responses to Ofsted's staff survey. There were no responses to Ofsted's pupil survey.

Inspection team

Wayne Jarvis, lead inspector	Her Majesty's Inspector
Tony Bishop	Ofsted Inspector
Alastair Ogle	Ofsted Inspector
Sarah Fowler	Ofsted Inspector
Caroline Dawes	Ofsted Inspector
Gary Phillips	Her Majesty's Inspector

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