

Inspection of The Winsford Academy

Grange Lane, Winsford, Cheshire CW7 2BT

Inspection dates:

15 and 16 November 2022

Overall effectiveness

Requires improvement

The quality of education

Requires improvement

Behaviour and attitudes

Requires improvement

Personal development

Requires improvement

Leadership and management

Requires improvement

Previous inspection grade

Good

What is it like to attend this school?

The Winsford Academy is a welcoming school where pupils settle quickly. Many pupils model the school's value of showing kindness. Pupils recognise and appreciate the support that staff provide for their learning and well-being.

Leaders' behaviour mantra of 'ready, respectful, safe' is known to all. However, while many pupils behave well, a considerable minority do not. This is particularly the case on corridors and during social times.

Standards of behaviour are improving because leaders have established clear expectations for pupils' conduct. That said, some staff do not apply leaders' behaviour systems consistently well.

Staff build supportive relationships with pupils. This means that, for the most part, pupils feel that they have someone to talk to in school if they have a concern. This helps most pupils to feel safe in school. Leaders deal with bullying effectively.

Leaders have high expectations of all pupils, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). Leaders have given careful thought to how pupils learn and they have designed curriculums accordingly. However, some pupils do not achieve as well as they should. This is because some teachers do not ensure that pupils have a secure enough understanding of earlier learning.

Leaders provide ample enrichment activities for pupils. These include mindfulness clubs, dance, chess and a club for young carers. Leaders encourage pupils to become active citizens through fundraising activities and their involvement in local community projects.

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

Enabling pupils to realise their ambitions and become responsible citizens is at the centre of leaders' vision for the quality of education for pupils. With the English Baccalaureate suite of subjects at the heart of the curriculum, it is suitably ambitious for all pupils, including those with SEND.

Subject leaders have started to order topics in a logical and coherent way. However, in some subjects, leaders have not ensured that teachers are clear enough about the building blocks of knowledge that pupils need for future learning.

Teachers have a strong knowledge of the subjects that they deliver. They use their expertise well to inform how they design learning. That said, some teachers do not check that pupils have understood and retained the knowledge that they need before embarking on new content. As a result, some pupils cannot recall key facts and they are unable to make connections with prior learning. This prevents some pupils from progressing securely through subject curriculums and achieving well.

Leaders' work to identify and support weaker readers is in the early stages of development. Specialist staff have been trained appropriately and they have started to check on younger pupils' reading knowledge. Staff provide suitable support for those pupils who struggle the most. However, the gaps in some pupils' reading knowledge hinders their achievement across the curriculum.

Most pupils with SEND follow the same ambitious curriculum as other pupils. When needed, leaders provide effective support for this group of pupils. Leaders' strong links with feeder primary schools enable the swift identification of pupils' needs. Staff working in the SEND department help to provide support for pupils' emotional development needs. Even so, the academic achievement of pupils with SEND reflects the variation across the rest of the school.

Pupils' behaviour during lessons is mostly calm and orderly. However, some staff do not apply leaders' behaviour systems consistently well. As a result, from time to time, some pupils' learning is disrupted. Added to this, some pupils do not attend school as often as they should. This means that they miss out on important learning.

The personal development curriculum, including relationships and sex education and health education, is ordered well and age appropriate. That said, a small minority of pupils do not understand the negative effects of discriminatory language. This is an issue that leaders are working to address and they have already secured some improvements. Added to this, pupils in key stage 4 are unable to access some aspects of the religious education curriculum. This limits their full readiness for life in modern Britain.

Pupils receive a wealth of careers advice, information and guidance. Leaders have forged effective links with employers and local colleges. Pupils are well informed prior to making the decisions about their next steps.

Most staff said that leaders are mindful of their workload. Staff are confident in leaders' ability to improve the school. Governors and senior leaders have systems in place to check on the quality of education that pupils receive.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders ensure that all staff receive regular and appropriate safeguarding training. This means that staff remain alert to the risks that pupils and their families may face. Staff understand the systems that they should use and the procedures that they must follow if they have a concern about a pupil.

Leaders have formed strong and effective links with external agencies to ensure that pupils and their families receive the support that they need in a timely manner.

Through assemblies, drop-down days and the personal development curriculum, pupils learn how to keep themselves safe.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Some teachers are not clear enough about the knowledge that pupils need for subsequent learning. They do not check that pupils' prior learning is secure before introducing new content. As a result, pupils' progress through different subject curriculums is variable. Leaders should ensure that the curriculum helps teachers to understand what should be taught and how pupils' learning should be checked.
- Leaders have not ensured that staff apply the systems to manage pupils' behaviour consistently well. As a result, some pupils do not behave as well they should and this disrupts the learning of their peers. Leaders should ensure that staff use the systems to manage pupils' behaviour as intended.
- Too many pupils are absent from school too often. This means that these pupils do not access the full curriculum and make the progress that they should. Leaders should ensure that pupils attend school regularly.
- Until recently, leaders have not identified quickly enough those pupils who struggle with reading. As a result, older pupils have gaps in their reading knowledge which hinders their access to the full curriculum. Leaders should ensure that the support for struggling readers helps pupils to catch up.
- Pupils in key stage 4 do not access some aspects of the statutory religious education curriculum. This means that some older pupils do not learn about the religious and cultural differences that contribute to a diverse and inclusive society. Leaders should ensure that all pupils can learn about these important aspects of the religious education curriculum so that pupils are prepared well for life in modern Britain.

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.

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	136184
Local authority	Cheshire West and Chester
Inspection number	10226218
Type of school	Secondary comprehensive
School category	Academy sponsor-led
Age range of pupils	11 to 16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	1,070
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Michael Gorton
Principal	Laura Halsall
Website	http://winsford.academy/
Date of previous inspection	4 and 5 May 2016, under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- This school is part of the The Fallibroome Trust.
- Three principals have led the school at different times since the last inspection. The current principal started in September 2022.
- Leaders use three registered alternative education providers and three unregistered education providers for some pupils.
- The school meets the requirements of the Baker Clause, which requires schools to provide pupils in Years 8 to 11 with information about approved technical education qualifications and apprenticeships.

Information about this inspection

The inspectors carried out this graded 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.

- As part of this inspection, inspectors carried out deep dives in the following subjects: English, mathematics, geography, physical education and art and design. For each deep dive, inspectors discussed the curriculum with subject leaders, visited a sample of lessons, spoke with teachers, spoke with some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work. Inspectors also spoke with leaders about the curriculum in some other subjects.
- Inspectors met with the principal, members of the senior leadership team and other school leaders.
- The lead inspector met with the chief executive officer of The Fallibroome Trust. The lead inspector also met with representatives of the local governing body and the board of trustees.
- Inspectors reviewed the school's safeguarding policies, procedures and records, including the checks made on the suitability of staff and governors. They met with leaders, governors, staff and pupils to further consider the effectiveness of safeguarding at the school. Inspectors spoke with representatives from the alternative education providers.
- Inspectors considered responses from staff and pupils to Ofsted's surveys. Inspectors reviewed responses from parents and carers to Ofsted Parent View.
- Inspectors observed pupils' behaviour in classrooms and around the school site. They also scrutinised pupils' behaviour and attendance records.

Inspection team

Niamh Howlett, lead inspector	His Majesty's Inspector
Ben Hill	His Majesty's Inspector
Gil Bourgade	Ofsted Inspector
Kate Bowker	His Majesty's Inspector

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