

Inspection of Great Western Academy

William Morris Way, Tadpole Garden Village, Swindon SN25 2PP

Inspection dates: 10 and 11 January 2023

Overall effectiveness	Good
The quality of education	Good
Behaviour and attitudes	Good
Personal development	Good
Leadership and management	Good
Sixth-form provision	Good
Previous inspection grade	Not previously inspected under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

What is it like to attend this school?

Leaders are ambitious for pupils to excel. The school's vision of 'achievement, care and excellence' is evident through the curriculum. As the school has grown, adding a new Year each year, staff have developed strong relationships with pupils.

Leaders aspire to give all pupils a rich experience of the wider curriculum. A broad enrichment programme is part of the whole school curriculum. The programme includes a geography club, the school newspaper, coding and various arts and sports. Many pupils complete the Duke of Edinburgh's Award scheme.

Sixth-form students are active in the school community. For example, they train as peer reading 'buddies' and listen to younger pupils read. The many opportunities for leadership include the school parliament, roles as ambassadors, prefects and as head students in the sixth form. Pupils say leaders listen to them and act following those discussions. Pupils are proud of their part in shaping the school.

Pupils are respectful and friendly. They learn about bullying and know how to report their concerns. Pupils say leaders act promptly to deal with issues they tell them about. However, a few pupils continue to use derogatory language, which their peers do not always report to staff.

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

Leaders have developed an ambitious and broad curriculum. It has evolved as the school has grown year by year. Leaders ensure the curriculum is sequenced well, so that pupils build on their learning. Pupils re-visit the important knowledge they have learned. This helps pupils to consolidate their learning. Across the curriculum, pupils regularly practise and apply skills. This prepares them for the next stages of their education. Sixth-form students choose from a broad range of subjects. These open up a wide range of career and further education opportunities. As the sixth form grows each year, curriculum choices broaden. Leaders are developing the five-year curriculum into a seven-year curriculum.

Through a cycle of assessment and review, pupils know what they need to do to improve their work. In most subjects, this prepares pupils effectively to move on with their learning. In a small number of subjects, pupils complete assessments that are not necessary or useful.

Teachers receive information that helps them to plan for and support all pupils. As a result, pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities receive the help they need and do well.

Surrounded by classrooms, the library is at the heart of the school. Leaders want pupils to be curious readers. They dedicate time each day for pupils from Years 7 to 13 to read. Pupils who are in the early stages of learning to read receive effective

help. Pupils who need to practise reading sit with older pupils to improve their fluency.

Leaders are proud of the wider curriculum. The broad range of clubs and trips ensures that all pupils have experiences they might not have otherwise. A well-planned personal, social and health education programme is in place for all pupils. Through the 'successful lives' programme, pupils learn about topics, such as healthy relationships, keeping safe and British values. A careers programme helps sixth-form students plan what they do next. However, the careers programme is not comprehensive enough for younger pupils.

In lessons, pupils focus on their learning. They appreciate the high expectations staff have of them and understand staff want them to do well. Pupils' detailed responses to questions show they understand what they have learned. They move between class discussion and independent work seamlessly. Sixth-form students say their teachers expect a lot of them and encourage them to think deeply.

Leaders have embraced the challenge of building a school from the ground up. Their vision for excellence threads throughout the different aspects of the school. The governing body is ambitious for pupils. Some of the governing body have overseen the school since its opening. This continuity has enabled governors to provide appropriate challenge and support to leaders. Leaders prioritise their responsibility for making sure staff have a manageable workload. Leaders ensure the school's programme of professional training covers all staff, including trainee teachers. As a result, staff say they feel valued by leaders. Parents are highly positive about the school. Many parents chose the school when it was in its early stages and speak highly of what it has achieved and become.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

The safety of pupils and students is a high priority across the school. Staff receive regular training and updating on safeguarding, which covers local and national issues. As a result, staff are alert to when pupils may be at potential risk and they report concerns promptly.

Leaders understand local safeguarding challenges. The school's safeguarding team is well trained and includes a social worker. The team works with external agencies to make sure vulnerable pupils and their families receive the help they need.

Pupils learn how to stay safe, both online and in person. They learn to manage risks such as those from the inappropriate use of social media.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- In some subjects, leaders have not considered the purpose of assessment deeply enough. As a result, pupils sometimes complete assessments that are not useful or as relevant as they could be for pupils or teachers. Leaders need to improve the use of assessment in these parts of the curriculum.
- The careers programme does not fully provide some pupils with detailed, comprehensive information about options for training, education and careers. As a result, some younger pupils do not receive enough information about possible future career choices. Leaders need to ensure the career programme is up to date, relevant and comprehensive.

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	145883
Local authority	Swindon
Inspection number	10256594
Type of school	Secondary Comprehensive
School category	Academy free school
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	880
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	115
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of Trust	Andrew Wild
Principal	Graham Davis
Website	www.gwacademy.co.uk
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Information about this school

- The school opened as a new free school on 1 September 2018 with a Year 7 cohort. This is the first academic year there has been a Year 11 cohort.
- The school opened the Sixth Form in 2019.
- The school uses one registered alternative provider.
- 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 provider received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. The inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with the provider and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the provider.

- Inspectors held discussions with the principal and other senior leaders, representatives of the governing body, the special educational needs coordinator, teachers, support staff, students and pupils.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in the following subjects: English, science, modern foreign languages, history and physical education. For each deep dive, 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.
- Inspectors scrutinised a range of school documentation, including minutes from governing body meetings and the school's improvement and self-evaluation plans.
- Inspectors considered the enrichment curriculum and the peer-reading scheme.
- The lead inspector met with the designated safeguarding leader, examined school records and discussed safeguarding cases. Inspectors also spoke to staff and pupils about safeguarding.
- Inspectors considered responses to Ofsted Parent View, including free-text comments. Inspectors also viewed the responses to the pupil survey and the responses to the staff survey.

Inspection team

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