

Inspection of a good school: West Walsall E-ACT Academy

Primley Avenue, Walsall, West Midlands WS2 9UA

Inspection dates: 17 and 18 January 2023

Outcome

West Walsall E-ACT Academy continues to be a good school.

What is it like to attend this school?

There is a positive sense of community at West Walsall E-ACT Academy.

Warm and respectful relationships characterise life at this school. Pupils are happy and safe. Leaders' vision is to 'strive for excellence'. They make sure that all pupils have the same opportunities. Pupils say they welcome and appreciate this.

There is a purposeful atmosphere around school. Pupils say they can focus on their learning well. Teachers act on any disrupted learning quickly to address any issues. During social times, pupils behave very well. If bullying occurs, leaders deal with it swiftly.

Leaders have made recent changes to the curriculum, especially in key stage 3 and in the sixth form. Pupils and students study a diverse range of subjects, which match their interests. These include textiles, photography and psychology. Pupils value the support they receive from their teachers in helping them to be successful.

The extra-curricular programme is rich and diverse. Pupils regularly take part in a range of clubs, such as karaoke, chess and jewellery making. They value being able to participate in The Duke of Edinburgh's Award. Opportunities such as the Year 11 trip to 'Poetry Live' in Birmingham enhance the curriculum.

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

The new headteacher took up post in May 2022. She has taken steps to introduce positive changes in the school. Leaders have developed an ambitious and well-sequenced curriculum, including in the sixth form. All pupils follow the same curriculum. This includes those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). Leaders' actions to develop the curriculum are leading to improved pupil outcomes.

Curriculum leaders have identified the key knowledge that pupils need to learn. The order of knowledge is also clearly set out. For example, in Year 10 history, pupils use their

previous knowledge of medicine, established in Year 9, to develop their current work on the NHS. However, some teachers do not consistently give pupils sufficient opportunities to deepen their knowledge and further develop their understanding. This means that pupils are not able to fully extend their understanding of different topics.

Teachers have strong subject knowledge. Most teachers check what pupils have remembered through targeted activities. These teachers use this information to identify and address any gaps in pupils' knowledge quickly. However, some teachers do not check what pupils know and understand well enough. This means that any gaps in pupils' knowledge persist, and make it harder for them to learn new things.

Leaders identify and support pupils with SEND effectively. Teachers use the 'pupil profiles' well and are clear about how to support pupils with SEND. They adapt the curriculum to meet pupils' needs. This means that pupils with SEND can successfully learn key knowledge and achieve well.

Leaders prioritise reading effectively through personal development sessions and through promoting whole-class reading texts. They identify pupils who need extra support with their reading and provide appropriate help. This helps pupils to become confident and fluent readers. Leaders are now prioritising pupils' wider reading opportunities, including outside the school day.

Pupils' personal development is exceptionally well supported. Leaders have a well-planned programme of personal, social, health and economic education. Pupils learn about topics such as healthy relationships, democracy and online safety. This helps pupils to feel safe and well prepared for the challenges they may face in the wider world. Pupils and students have opportunities to discuss careers, university aspirations and apprenticeships. This prepares them well for the next stages of their education, employment or training.

School leaders have created a culture where the wider school community supports their vision. Trustees have a clear and precise understanding of the school and its priorities. They promote an honest and transparent relationship with leaders. Trustees provide effective challenge and support to leaders. This helps to ensure the school continues to improve.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders know the pupils and their local context very well. They use this knowledge to plan support and help for pupils and their families. Safeguarding is embedded in a culture where all staff are urged to report any concerns. Staff report concerns and receive extensive training on local or wider safeguarding issues throughout the year. Leaders are quick to identify any pupils at risk of harm. External agencies are contacted quickly when early help is required.

Pupils know whom to talk to and how they can report any concerns they have. Pupils are taught about how to keep themselves safe, including online.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- In key stage 3, some teachers lack the confidence to broaden the range of pupils' learning activities in their subject. This means that pupils miss opportunities to gain a deeper understanding of the subject. Leaders should ensure that, across the school, teachers continue to provide pupils with a range of learning activities that will expand learning and deepen understanding.
- Some teachers do not regularly check what pupils know and understand. Therefore, some teachers do not have a secure enough understanding of what pupils have learned to be able to identify any gaps in their knowledge. Leaders should ensure that all teachers regularly check what pupils have learned so that any gaps in learning are identified and addressed.

Background

When we have judged a school to be good, we will then normally go into the school about once every four years to confirm that the school remains good. This is called an ungraded inspection, and it is carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. We do not give graded judgements on an ungraded inspection. However, if we find evidence that a school would now receive a higher or lower grade, then the next inspection will be a graded inspection, which is carried out under section 5 of the Act. Usually this is within one to two years of the date of the ungraded inspection. If we have serious concerns about safeguarding, behaviour or the quality of education, we will deem the ungraded inspection a graded inspection immediately.

This is the first ungraded inspection since we judged the school to be good in October 2017.

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	138374
Local authority	Walsall
Inspection number	10256980
Type of school	Secondary comprehensive
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	1,182
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	130
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Lord Jim Knight
Headteacher	Kerry Solway-Blower
Website	https://westwalsallacademy.e-act.org.uk
Dates of previous inspection	31 October and 1 November 2017, under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The headteacher was appointed in May 2022 and was previously the deputy headteacher.
- Leaders use five alternative providers.
- The school meets the requirements of the provider access legislation, which requires schools to provide pupils in Years 7 to 13 with information and engagement about approved technical education qualifications and apprenticeships.

Information about this inspection

- 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 focused on the following deep dives: English, science, history and art. 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 also looked at other subjects to check the curriculum and to check how they are taught.
- Inspectors reviewed a range of school documents. These included information about behaviour, attendance, the school's curriculum and improvement planning. The school website was also checked.
- Inspectors talked to staff and leaders about safeguarding arrangements. They examined how leaders make employment checks on staff and scrutinised further safeguarding records. They also asked how incidents reported by pupils are recorded and analysed.
- Inspectors observed informal times of the day to evaluate safeguarding and pupils' behaviour.
- Inspectors held meetings with trustees, the headteacher, senior leaders, subject leaders, teachers, including early careers teachers, and pupils. They also talked informally to pupils and staff to gather information about school life.
- Inspectors considered the responses to Ofsted Parent View, and the free-text comments. Inspectors also considered responses to Ofsted's staff survey and pupil questionnaire.

Inspection team

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