

Inspection of a good school: The Weston Road Academy

Blackheath Lane, Stafford, Staffordshire ST18 0YG

Inspection dates:

21 and 22 March 2023

Outcome

The Weston Road Academy continues to be a good school.

What is it like to attend this school?

The Weston Road Academy is a calm, caring school in which pupils can thrive and feel safe. Staff know pupils well and support them to achieve their full potential. Pupils appreciate this support and are happy at school. They respond by working hard and achieving high standards.

Leaders have high expectations of pupils' behaviour. Pupils' behaviour in lessons and around school is positive. Occasional instances of poor behaviour are well managed. Pupils say that if bullying does occur staff deal with it well.

The school offers pupils a wide range of extra-curricular opportunities. Examples include the Duke of Edinburgh Award, sports, coding, puzzle, debating and drama clubs. Participation in these activities is flourishing. For example, 120 pupils recently took part in the school production 'We Will Rock You'. Pupils talked enthusiastically about how much they enjoy these opportunities.

Most parents and carers would recommend the school. They praise leadership, quality of teaching and pastoral support systems. Several parents comment on the high-quality support for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). One parent summed up the views of many by saying, 'The school places the pupils at the centre of decisions made to ensure they can reach their potential and fulfil their dreams and ambitions'.

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

Leaders and governors have an accurate view of the school's many strengths and areas for improvement. The school improvement plan focuses on areas identified for improvement. Leaders and governors rigorously monitor progress in each of these areas.

Leaders are ambitious for every pupil. All pupils, including those with SEND, study a wide range of subjects. Teachers have strong subject knowledge and plan well-thought-out

lessons. Leaders ensure that academic rigour sits at the heart of a broad and balanced curriculum. At key stage 3, the national curriculum is fully covered. Key stage 4 ensures that all pupils study a strong academic core of subjects. Beyond this, pupils are encouraged to diversify. The curriculum prepares pupils well for their next steps at the end of Year 11.

The school is a part of the 'Stafford 14-19 Partnership', bringing together sixth-form students from five schools. Sixth-form provision is jointly planned by the partnership schools. This gives students access to a wide range of A-level and level 3 BTEC qualifications. All students also have weekly personal, social and health education lessons. This provides students with strong support when considering their next steps in education and/or employment. Academic studies are supplemented by a range of enrichment activities. Students regularly support the learning of younger pupils, lead school clubs and contribute to charitable events. Overall, sixth-form provision gives students access to a well-rounded experience in years 12 and 13.

The needs of pupils with SEND are identified swiftly. Staff make use of the information they have regarding the learning needs of these pupils to adapt lessons effectively. As a result, pupils with SEND are able to access the full curriculum.

Lessons are calm and orderly. Any disruption to pupils' learning is rare. Lessons are based around clear routines. Teachers re-visit pupils' prior learning before moving on to independent 'thinking hard' tasks. These routines help pupils to know and remember what they have been taught. Teachers regularly assess pupils' work and give useful feedback. Most pupils make use of feedback to improve their work. However, some pupils do not use this as effectively. As a result, some pupils have gaps in their learning.

Leaders have recognised that low literacy levels hinder the ability of some pupils to access the full curriculum. In response to this, they introduced a targeted reading support programme at the start of the current academic year. There is evidence that this programme is impacting positively. However, there is more to do. Leaders have plans in place to track the impact of the programme and to train more staff to support delivery. It is crucial that leaders see these plans through.

All pupils have weekly social, health and relationships education (SHaRE) lessons. As a part of these they explore areas, such as cultural diversity, healthy lifestyles and the world of work. Pupils are encouraged to make a positive contribution to the school and local community. They respond well to this encouragement. For example, many pupils participated in a local 'fun run' to support a local cancer trust hospice.

Staff are happy and proud to work in the school. They say that it is well led and managed and that leaders trust them. They feel that leaders consider their workload when planning improvements.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders have ensured that the school has a strong culture of safeguarding. Staff are trained to recognise when pupils may be at risk of harm. Safeguarding leaders ensure that any concerns are followed up promptly. They work with families and a range of agencies to ensure that additional support is in place where it is needed.

Pupils are taught how to stay safe. They talked about work done in 'SHaRE' lessons, form time and assemblies around topics, such as online safety, appropriate relationships and knife crime. They are confident that there is always an adult in school who they can talk to if they have a concern and that will get the support they need.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- In some subjects, assessment strategies are underdeveloped. This means that pupils do not always respond to teacher feedback to improve their work. Leaders should ensure that pupils respond to assessment consistently in all subjects to learn the full curriculum.
- Some pupils have weak reading skills. This hinders their access to the full curriculum. Leaders should ensure that all staff have the expertise they need to support pupils to develop their reading skills, so they are able to access the curriculum fully.

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 second ungraded inspection since we judged the school to be good in October 2013.

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	137553
Local authority	Staffordshire
Inspection number	10257026
Type of school	Secondary Comprehensive
School category	Academy converter
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	997
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	87
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governing body	Dr. Andrew Hind
Principal	Mrs. Ann Kingman
Website	http://www.westonroad.staffs.sch.uk/
Date of previous inspection	23 January 2018, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The school uses two registered alternative providers and one unregistered alternative provider.
- 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.

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 met with the headteacher and other senior leaders. Meetings were held with curriculum leaders and the special educational needs coordinator. Inspectors also met with a range of other staff and governors.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: English, science, and history. For each deep dive, inspectors met with subject leaders, considered curriculum guidance, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers, spoke to some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work.
- Inspectors visited one of the school's alternative provision providers. They spoke to leaders of this provision and spoke to pupils about their experiences of the provision.
- Inspectors also talked to subject leaders, visited lessons, spoke to pupils, and looked at pupils' work in several other subject areas.
- Inspectors observed pupils' behaviour in lessons, moving between lessons, at break and lunchtimes. Pupils were spoken to formally and informally regarding their experiences of the school.
- Inspectors scrutinised a range of safeguarding information, including the school's safeguarding policy. They spoke to staff and pupils about safeguarding and looked at how pupils learn about keeping themselves safe. The lead inspector spoke to the safeguarding leader about the reporting and recording of any safeguarding incidents.
- Inspectors took account of the 'free-text' comments and the responses on Ofsted Parent View. Inspectors also considered the responses to Ofsted's pupil and staff surveys.

Inspection team

Eddie Wilkes, lead inspector

Ofsted Inspector

David Hermitt

Ofsted Inspector

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