

Inspection of a good school: Woodham Academy

Washington Crescent, Newton Aycliffe, County Durham DL5 4AX

Inspection dates:

18 and 19 April 2023

Outcome

Woodham Academy continues to be a good school.

What is it like to attend this school?

Woodham Academy continues to grow in size and popularity. Construction of a new school building is under way. The number of pupils who attend the school has also increased significantly in recent years. Parents and carers of pupils in Year 7 particularly appreciate how well their children have been supported to settle into this flourishing community.

Leaders understand the importance of keeping the needs of pupils at the heart of all decisions; this is crucial as the school continues to grow in size. Strong relationships between adults and pupils are evident. Pupils explain that they trust adults to help them. Pupils who join this school, who have struggled at other schools, find a fresh start here and thrive. They value the support of adults. Pupils are taught about respect and tolerance. The vast majority of pupils agree that bullying is taken seriously by adults and dealt with quickly.

Leaders have high expectations for what pupils can achieve academically. Leaders are ambitious about the experiences they want pupils to have beyond the classroom, from trips abroad to work experience placements. There are a range of academies in school that give pupils the chance to develop their interests, including numerous sports, performing arts, leadership, engineering and eco-academies. Pupils value these opportunities.

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

Leaders have ensured that curriculum thinking, across different subjects, is ambitious and intended to broaden pupils' horizons. In art, leaders have ensured that pupils in key stage 3 learn about famous paintings every week to develop their cultural understanding. Leaders have also designed the curriculum to ensure that pupils understand important social issues. For example, in science, there is a deliberate focus on diabetes to ensure that pupils are educated about obesity. Leaders have prioritised developing pupils' academic vocabulary. This has been carefully woven through all curriculum areas.

Leaders have decided what is the most important knowledge they want pupils to learn. They have organised this knowledge logically so pupils can build on what they already know. In most subjects, pupils regularly recall this most important knowledge to make sure they remember it. This recall takes place in 'do now' tasks at the beginning of lessons. In some subjects, such as history, assessment is used very effectively to identify gaps in pupils' understanding. In history, leaders have also anticipated misconceptions pupils might have and thought carefully about how to challenge them. Other subjects are in the process of redesigning assessment systems that will provide teachers with the most useful information about pupils' knowledge.

Teachers use modelling effectively to introduce new content in classrooms. Most teachers use careful questioning to draw out high-quality responses from pupils. Most teachers identify and address any misconceptions quickly. Teachers have high expectations for the vocabulary that pupils use to explain their ideas.

Leaders ensure that pupils who find reading more difficult receive additional, targeted support. Leaders have introduced weekly tutor time reading to develop pupils' love of reading.

Pupils behave well in lessons and at social times. They are focused and engaged in lessons. Most pupils are keen to participate and do well. Pupils are clear about the expectations for their behaviour. They understand the consequences if these high expectations are not met. Pupils equally value the rewards and recognition they get from staff. Pupils interact with maturity at breaktimes and lunchtimes.

Leaders have recently redesigned the personal development curriculum. This curriculum is now being delivered weekly so pupils receive these important messages more regularly. Pupils learn about protected characteristics, tolerance and diversity. Leaders are ambitious about developing the provision for pupils' personal development yet further. They are now focusing on how they deliberately mould pupils' character to build their resilience and independence.

Staff are proud to be members of this community. They value the coaching process and the professional development that they regularly receive. They enjoy working with like-minded colleagues. Staff across the school are committed to providing the best possible education for pupils. They recognise the impact of their own professional development on pupils' education. Staff believe that leaders consider their workload and their well-being. They describe leaders as approachable and supportive.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Pupils feel safe in school. Staff teach pupils how to keep themselves safe from risks, in the community and online. Pupils have trusted adults that they can talk to if they need support. Leaders have prioritised safeguarding through additional staffing as the school has grown in size. They have particularly invested in providing mental health support in

school. Leaders also work with a wide range of external agencies to provide families with help where necessary. Leaders responsible for safeguarding know pupils well. Staff complete regular safeguarding training. Leaders ensure that they are well informed about local safeguarding risks.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- In some subjects, assessment does not precisely identify gaps in pupils' knowledge. This means that teachers are not able to use this information as efficiently to adapt the curriculum moving forward. Leaders should continue to develop their assessment systems so that they are closely matched to the curriculum and inform future teaching.

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 May 2018.

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 | 138717 |
| Local authority | Durham |
| Inspection number | 10286525 |
| Type of school | Secondary |
| School category | Academy converter |
| Age range of pupils | 11 to 16 |
| Gender of pupils | Mixed |
| Number of pupils on the school roll | 1017 |
| Appropriate authority | Board of trustees |
| Chair of trust | Garry Stout |
| Headteacher | Andrew Bell |
| Website | www.woodham.org.uk |
| Date of previous inspection | 9 May 2018 |

Information about this school

- The number of pupils attending Woodham Academy has significantly increased since the previous inspection.
- A new school building is currently under construction.
- A small number of pupils attend alternative provision. The school uses six alternative providers. Three of these providers are registered and three are unregistered.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors spoke with a wide range of school leaders, including the headteacher and deputy headteachers. They also met with leaders responsible for reading, careers, personal development and behaviour.
- Inspectors also met with representatives from the trust, including the chief executive officer and the chair of the trust. They also spoke with representatives from the governing body, including the chair.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in the following subjects: science, history and art. For each deep dive, they met with curriculum leaders, looked at curriculum plans, visited a

sample of lessons, spoke to teachers, spoke to pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work.

- Inspectors also looked at curriculum plans for other subjects.
- Inspectors checked the single central record and documentation regarding safe recruitment. They also met with leaders responsible for safeguarding. They checked records of actions taken to keep pupils safe.
- An inspector scrutinised the checks in place to keep pupils separate from construction work during the building process.
- Inspectors spoke to a range of pupils and staff, formally and informally, about safeguarding.
- An inspector met with leaders responsible for the provision for pupils with SEND. Inspectors also checked how those pupils are supported in lessons and looked at support plans.
- Inspectors observed the behaviour of pupils at social times and in lessons.
- Inspectors considered the responses to the pupil and staff surveys. They also considered the responses to Ofsted Parent View, Ofsted's online questionnaire.

Inspection team

Katie Spurr, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

Bernard Senier

Ofsted Inspector

The Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted) regulates and inspects to achieve excellence in the care of children and young people, and in education and skills for learners of all ages. It regulates and inspects childcare and children's social care, and inspects the Children and Family Court Advisory and Support Service (Cafcass), schools, colleges, initial teacher training, further education and skills, adult and community learning, and education and training in prisons and other secure establishments. It assesses council children's services, and inspects services for children looked after, safeguarding and child protection.

If you would like a copy of this document in a different format, such as large print or Braille, please telephone 0300 123 1231, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.

You may reuse this information (not including logos) free of charge in any format or medium, under the terms of the Open Government Licence. To view this licence, visit www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/doc/open-government-licence/, write to the Information Policy Team, The National Archives, Kew, London TW9 4DU, or email: psi@nationalarchives.gsi.gov.uk.

This publication is available at <http://reports.ofsted.gov.uk/>.

Interested in our work? You can subscribe to our monthly newsletter for more information and updates: <http://eepurl.com/iTrDn>.

Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T: 0300 123 1231
Textphone: 0161 618 8524
E: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
W: www.gov.uk/ofsted

© Crown copyright 2023