

Inspection of Whitefield School

Macdonald Road, Walthamstow, London E17 4AZ

Inspection dates: 10 and 11 May 2023

Overall effectiveness **Good**

The quality of education	Good
Behaviour and attitudes	Good
Personal development	Good
Leadership and management	Good
Early years provision	Good
Sixth-form provision	Good
Previous inspection grade	Outstanding

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils attending Whitefield school are happy, well cared for and kept safe. Pupils are treated with dignity and respect and enjoy positive relationships with adults. Staff are highly knowledgeable about working with the considerable range of varying needs.

Leaders have high expectations for what pupils can achieve. Pupils access a broad and interesting curriculum that prepares them well for the next stage of their education, employment or training. The curriculum in most subjects is well designed to ensure that pupils achieve the outcomes outlined in their education, health and care (EHC) plans. Over time, pupils are well supported to develop their communication, language, independence and physical confidence.

Pupils behave well. This is because staff are consistent in their expectations and provide well-targeted support to manage and regulate pupils' emotions. Pupils benefit from a well-planned careers programme, including opportunities for work experience. They are well prepared for life in the world beyond school.

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

In close partnership with a team of speech and language therapists, leaders have designed an ambitious curriculum that builds from pupils' different starting points. Developing pupils' language and behaviours is prioritised. Staff observe and identify pupils' preferred communication techniques. These are practised and expanded on so that pupils learn to communicate effectively through gestures, words, symbols, images and objects. As a result, pupils are increasingly confident to make choices, state their opinions and say 'yes' or 'no'. For example, during snack time, pupils are encouraged to communicate their choice and indicate when they have finished.

The planned curriculum goes beyond what is detailed in pupils' EHC plans. When pupils are ready, they follow a curriculum that aligns with what is expected nationally. Post-16 students access a range of qualifications that prepare them well for the next stage of their education, employment or training. In most subjects and pathways, the important knowledge that pupils need to secure has been clearly identified and logically sequenced. This supports pupils to develop a deeper understanding of important ideas. For example, in mathematics, children in early years practise counting out different objects. Older pupils apply this knowledge in different contexts, for example when they are measuring or buying ingredients.

However, this is not consistent. In some subjects, the important ideas that pupils need to learn are not identified as clearly. In these areas, pupils do not develop as secure an understanding over time.

Leaders prioritise reading. In early years, children engage, listen and join in with familiar stories and songs. This ensures that they are ready to begin learning to read from Reception. Staff are well trained and deliver phonics with precision. Pupils show persistence and enjoyment when practising reading. Carefully chosen books that match the sounds they have learned help pupils to practise their reading and become fluent.

Pupils' EHC plans are shared with staff, along with pupils' personalised support plans. Teachers use these documents to ensure that the curriculum provides pupils with sufficient time to practise and embed the skills and knowledge they need. Teachers check how well pupils are progressing towards achieving their targets. They amend tasks and activities accordingly so that pupils are well supported to succeed.

Leaders have high expectations of pupils' behaviour. Staff identify what causes pupils to become dysregulated. This information is used to design and implement appropriate strategies to manage and reduce these instances. For example, pupils understand and anticipate the daily school routines. This supports them to regulate their behaviour. Leaders' work in this area has led to a reduction in significant behaviour incidents. Pupils are generally kind to one another and display positive attitudes towards their learning.

Pupils' personal development is well considered. The curriculum has been designed to help pupils to develop their understanding of important issues. These include safe and respectful relationships, maintaining financial security, physical health, and understanding democracy and the rule of law. Pupils learn about important events and festivals, such as Eid, World Children's Day, Black History Month, Pride, Mental Health Awareness Week and the recent coronation of King Charles III. Pupils receive appropriate advice and guidance regarding their future career options. For example, pupils complete work placements in hospitality, horticulture and manufacturing.

Leaders are increasing the opportunities that pupils have to visit the community and take part in different experiences. For example, pupils enjoy working in the local allotment. A range of after-school clubs are provided, including cookery, drumming and choir. However, there are limited opportunities for pupils to engage in different activities at breaktimes. This means they do not have as much opportunity to develop their social interaction with their peers outside of the classroom.

Staff appreciate the opportunities they have to develop professionally. They feel that leaders are considerate of their workload and well-being.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

All staff have been trained to recognise signs that a pupil may be at risk of harm and how to report such concerns.

Leaders meet regularly to discuss and track pupils who may be at risk. They keep meticulous records and engage well with external partners and agencies. This helps to secure appropriate support for pupils and their families.

Trustees understand their role in safeguarding. They ensure compliance with statutory guidance through regular audits, including of pre-employment checks. Pupils are taught about safety through a carefully planned curriculum that considers their specific learning needs and vulnerabilities.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- In some subjects, the component knowledge that pupils need to learn is not clearly defined. In these instances, pupils do not consistently build a secure body of knowledge. Leaders should identify the specific knowledge that they want pupils to learn and remember across subjects and pathways.
- There are limited opportunities for pupils to engage in different activities during breaktimes and lunchtimes. This limits social interaction with their peers beyond the classroom. Leaders should expand opportunities for pupils to engage in social activities with their peers at breaktimes and lunchtimes.

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	140795
Local authority	London Borough of Waltham Forest
Inspection number	10277489
Type of school	Special
School category	Academy special converter
Age range of pupils	2 to 19
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in sixth form	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	359
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	74
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Mr Robert Turner
Principal	Rachel Rai
Website	www.whitefield.org.uk
Dates of previous inspection	24 and 25 May 2022, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The school caters for pupils with a range of special educational needs. All pupils have an EHC plan.
- The school is part of the Whitefield Academy Trust.
- Leaders do not make use of alternative provision.
- Of the 74 students who are aged 16 or over, 12 are on roll in the sixth form.
- 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

The inspectors carried out this graded inspection under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

- This was the second routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. Inspectors discussed any continued impact of the pandemic with leaders and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in English, including reading and communication, mathematics, science, design and technology, and art. To do this, they met with subject leaders to discuss the curriculum, had discussions with staff and pupils, visited lessons and looked at samples of pupils' work. Inspectors also considered the curriculum in other subjects as part of this inspection.
- Inspectors scrutinised a range of documents, including leaders' evaluation of the school and priorities for improvement.
- Inspectors met with senior leaders and with a selection of subject leaders, teachers and support staff.
- Inspectors met with the chief executive officer of the Whitefield Academy Trust and spoke with the chair of trust, a trustee and a representative from the local authority.
- The inspection team reviewed the arrangements for safeguarding by scrutinising records and through discussions with leaders, staff and pupils.
- The views of pupils, parents and staff were considered through discussions and by looking at information collected from Ofsted's surveys.

Inspection team

Una Buckley, lead inspector	His Majesty's Inspector
Sam Hainey	His Majesty's Inspector
Ruth Harding	Ofsted Inspector
Kieran Bird	His Majesty's Inspector

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