

Inspection of LWS Academy

Montefiore Drive, Sarisbury Green, Southampton, Hampshire SO31 7NL

Inspection dates: 27 and 28 June 2023

Overall effectiveness	Good
The quality of education	Good
Behaviour and attitudes	Good
Personal development	Good
Leadership and management	Good
Previous inspection grade	Requires improvement

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils benefit from the specialist support and care they receive at this school. Many pupils have had difficult and varied educational experiences. They have complex needs which are well understood by the expertly trained staff at the school. The mutually warm and kind relationships between pupils and staff foster a strong sense of trust. As a result, pupils feel safe and secure enough to take part in lessons and learn.

Pupils know the high ambitions leaders have for what they will achieve. Pupils respond well to this and, by Year 10, many of them have clear and ambitious plans for the next stage in their lives. Pupils value their learning, especially in English and mathematics. They know that working well with their teachers in these subjects will help them to achieve their goals.

The school environment is mostly calm, both inside and outside of lessons. While disruptive behaviour is rare, sometimes pupils find it hard to regulate their emotions. When this happens, staff provide effective support to help pupils feel calm and safe. Bullying and unkind behaviour do not happen often. When they do, staff skilfully help pupils to understand the impact their words or actions may have on others.

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

Leaders have constructed a sequenced and ambitious curriculum. They have considered the needs of pupils and thought about what they need to know and in what order. Leaders recognise that some pupils have gaps in their learning. They have made precise changes to the curriculum to help pupils catch up. Consequently, pupils progress well through the intended curriculum.

In most lessons, teachers plan engaging activities which help pupils to build knowledge over time. Where the curriculum is strongest, teachers have secure subject knowledge. However, in some subjects, the lesson activities do not always match the high ambitions of the curriculum in place. As a result, pupils are not learning as well as they could across the entire curriculum.

Leaders have placed a sharp focus on the teaching of reading. The reading strategy is robust and means that pupils learn vital comprehension skills. Leaders complete precise checks to see what support pupils may need with their reading. For those who need support with the earliest steps in reading, there is a phonics scheme in place. Highly skilled teachers provide pupils with additional activities to help them to close any phonics gaps and learn to read with growing confidence.

A sense of inclusion pervades the school. The special educational needs and/or disabilities provision within the school is effective. Leaders have ensured that staff are well trained to understand the wide range of needs of pupils. Due to this, support in class is seamless and helps pupils to learn well. Staff know pupils very

well and this is evident in the expert way staff support them when they do not feel ready to learn.

Leaders have prioritised the personal development of pupils. Pupils learn to understand and respect difference through learning about different cultures. Leaders provide pupils with a range of wider opportunities beyond the classroom. However, leaders have not yet identified the intended outcomes for these activities and how they can be sequenced to best support pupils' life skills and character development.

Leaders are determined to help pupils to achieve their best. They make highly effective use of alternative provision to give pupils knowledge of areas they want to work in when they leave school. This includes sessions in mechanics, the armed forces, construction and boat building. In addition, from Year 7 onwards, pupils learn about different education, training and employment options. Careers interviews in key stage 4, as well as in school guidance from key workers, help pupils' preparation for adulthood.

Trustees work strategically with school leaders to ensure that pupils and their families have the support they need. This includes ongoing work to improve attendance. However, persistent absence remains too high across the school. Staff are proud to work at this school and buy into the vision that leaders have. They feel supported and valued in their work.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders have ensured that staff are well trained to spot when a pupil or their family may need help. As such, staff are quick to record and raise concerns with leaders. Safeguarding records are well organised and detailed. They show the tenacious and effective action leaders take to keep pupils and their families safe.

Leaders understand the risks that their pupils may face. They ensure that tutors teach pupils well how to be safe both online and in the community. Leaders work well with external agencies to ensure that families get the help they need, at the right time.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- In a small number of subjects, leaders have not embedded all of their changes to the curriculum. This means that pupils are not consistently learning as well as they could across the entire curriculum. Leaders should ensure that staff have the knowledge they need in all curriculum areas to ensure that pupils build coherent knowledge effectively over time.

- Leaders are still refining their approach to personal development and wider opportunities. As such, pupils do not develop life and employability skills as well as they could. Leaders should ensure they have a cohesive and sequenced approach to this, so pupils are able to build these vital skills over time and be as ready as possible for life beyond school.
- Persistent absence of pupils remains high. This means some pupils are not fully benefiting from all that school has to offer. Leaders should now carefully consider what additional strategies and support, both within and external to the school, pupils and their families need to improve attendance.

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	140732
Local authority	Hampshire
Inspection number	10268335
Type of school	Special
School category	Academy special converter
Age range of pupils	11 to 16
Gender of pupils	Boys
Number of pupils on the school roll	58
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Christian Beswick
Headteacher	Christopher Berry
Website	lws.gformat.org
Date of previous inspection	13 July 2021, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- LWS Academy provides specialist support for pupils with social, emotional and mental health difficulties. All pupils attending the school have an education, health and care plan.
- The school makes use of five unregistered alternative providers.
- The school meets the requirements of the Baker Clause, which requires schools to provide pupils in Years 7 to 13 with information about approved technical and educational qualifications and apprenticeships.

Information about this inspection

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

- Inspectors discussed any continued 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 members of the leadership team. The lead inspector met with the vice chair of trustees, and two other members of

the trustee board. The lead inspector also met with the trust's chief executive officer.

- Inspectors carried out deep dives in the following subjects: reading, mathematics, food technology and science. For each deep dive, they 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 observed pupils' behaviour around the school and in lessons. They also spoke to pupils in lessons and during play and lunchtimes.
- Inspectors considered a range of documents including leaders' evaluations of the school, their school action plans and minutes from trustee meetings.
- Inspectors took into account the views of parents and carers through their responses to Ofsted Parent View.
- Inspectors took account of the views of staff through conversations and the responses to the online staff survey.
- Inspectors evaluated the effectiveness of the safeguarding arrangements in the school by speaking with leaders, staff and pupils. They met with the designated safeguarding leads to discuss the arrangements for safeguarding. During these meetings, the lead inspector scrutinised records and sampled case files to explore how the school identifies and supports pupils at risk of harm. Inspectors also examined the school's work to recruit and check on the suitability of staff, as well as checking staff's knowledge of their responsibilities.

Inspection team

Nina Marabese, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

Alan Johnson

Ofsted Inspector

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