

Inspection of a good school: Whetley Academy

Whetley Lane, Girdlington, Bradford, West Yorkshire BD8 9HZ

Inspection dates:

27 and 28 September 2023

Outcome

Whetley Academy continues to be a good school.

The headteacher of this school is Jonathan Townend. The school is part of Delta Academies Trust, which means that other people in the trust also have responsibility for running the school. The trust is run by the chief executive officer, Paul Tarn, and overseen by a board of trustees, chaired by Steven Hodsman.

What is it like to attend this school?

Whetley Academy is a diverse, inclusive and caring school. Leaders place the highest priority on the well-being and safety of everyone in the school community. Staff know pupils well and use this knowledge to support pupils' welfare. One pupil, typical of many, said, 'Staff really care for us here.' Many pupils leave and arrive at the school mid-year. Yet, everyone is made to feel welcome and included. Pupils play and learn harmoniously. Bullying is rare. If it does happen, staff deal with it quickly.

Leaders have high expectations of what pupils can achieve, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). Pupils respond well to the ambitions their teachers have for them. As a result, pupils achieve well from their starting points, over time.

Pupils are, rightly, proud of their school and keen to talk to visitors. Pupils appreciate the opportunities that leaders provide to broaden their interests and to take on responsibilities. These include being members of the school council and play leaders. Pupils also enjoy a broad range of after-school clubs, and visits to museums or places of worship. Older pupils experience an overnight residential trip to an outdoor education centre. These opportunities help pupils to develop greater independence and resilience by the time they leave the school at the end of Year 6.

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

Trustees, senior leaders and staff share the school's unwavering vision to give pupils the best education possible. This is reflected in the good-quality education and care that pupils receive.

Senior leaders have made curriculum development a priority. Subject leaders, alongside leaders in the trust, have created an engaging curriculum that precisely sets out what pupils should learn and when. Teachers speak highly about the training and coaching that they receive. This supports them to understand and teach the curriculum well.

Leaders understand the importance of pupils becoming competent readers. Because of this, they have placed reading at the heart of the curriculum. Staff read to pupils every day, and this helps them to develop a rich and wide-ranging vocabulary. Older pupils speak enthusiastically about their favourite books and authors.

Teaching phonics starts from the beginning of Reception. Staff are experts in teaching early reading. Pupils confidently apply their phonics knowledge when reading. The books that pupils read are well matched to the sounds that they know. Pupils who fall behind receive extra help. This helps them to catch up quickly.

Children in the Nursery provision receive high levels of care and support. Adults working with the youngest children skilfully use questions to develop children's understanding when learning. Nursery children enjoy hearing a range of stories, poems and rhymes. Adults encourage them to use a growing range of words.

Typically, teachers have strong knowledge of the subjects that they teach. Teachers ensure pupils are taught curriculum content in a sensible order. In most subjects, teachers use assessments effectively to check pupils' knowledge and any gaps in their learning. In mathematics, for example, staff provide pupils with opportunities to revisit and practise their knowledge and skills. Pupils use their previous learning to help them understand new subject content. As a result, pupils are secure in their mathematical knowledge. Many speak about how they enjoy their learning. In some foundation curriculum subjects, teachers do not consistently use assessment well enough to check precisely that pupils fully understand prior content before they are introduced to more complex tasks. This means that some pupils do not develop the knowledge the school intends.

Leaders have a well-developed understanding of the needs of pupils with SEND. Staff work well with external professionals and parents. There are rigorous systems in place to identify pupils with SEND. Effective plans set out the precise support that pupils need. Teachers use the plans well to provide the right, tailored support. Pupils learn the same ambitious curriculum as their peers. Consequently, pupils with SEND thrive.

Pupils' personal development is woven through the curriculum. Pupils learn about the lives and achievements of people from a range of backgrounds and ethnicities. They have a deep knowledge of different cultures and religions. They learn to be respectful, tolerant and fair with each other. Leaders are aspirational for all pupils and promote understanding of future career opportunities effectively. They are determined to ensure that pupils are well prepared for future life.

The trustees and academy advisory board have an astute and accurate understanding of the school's strengths and the areas they want to further improve. They make highly effective use of their expertise to challenge and support school leaders. Senior leaders, including the academy advisory board, are considerate of staff's well-being and workload.

Staff feel valued. They appreciate leaders' actions to support them with their workload and the professional development they receive. Morale is high. Staff are proud to work at the school. Parents and carers are overwhelmingly positive about the school.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- In a few foundation subjects, teachers do not consistently use assessment to check precisely that pupils have fully understand prior content before they introduce more complex tasks. As a result, pupils do not consistently develop subject-specific knowledge as well as they should. Leaders should ensure that teachers check with precision pupils' understanding in the foundation subjects before moving on to new learning.

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' is used to mean pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND); pupils who meet the [definition of children in need of help and protection](#); pupils receiving statutory local authority support from a social worker; and pupils who otherwise meet the criteria used for deciding the school's [pupil premium funding](#) (this includes pupils claiming free school meals at any point in the last six years, looked after children (children in local authority care) and/or children who left care through adoption or another formal route).

School details

Unique reference number	139046
Local authority	Bradford
Inspection number	10290222
Type of school	Primary
School category	Academy sponsor-led
Age range of pupils	2 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	485
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Steven Hodsman
Head of academy	Jonathan Townend
Website	http://www.whetleyacademy.org.uk
Dates of previous inspection	9 and 10 May 2018, under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The school is part of the Delta Academies Trust, a multi-academy trust. A new head of academy was appointed in October 2022.
- The school does not make use of any alternative providers.
- The school has a nursery as well as provision for two-year-old children.

Information about this inspection

Inspections are a point-in-time judgement about the quality of a school's education provision.

- This was the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. The inspector discussed the impact of the pandemic with the school and has taken that into account in her evaluation of the school.
- The inspector had several meetings with the executive principal and the head of academy during the inspection.
- The inspector met with other senior leaders and with representatives of the trust and academy advisory board.

- The inspector carried out deep dives in early reading, mathematics and art. For each deep dive, the inspector discussed the curriculum with subject leaders, visited lessons, spoke to teachers, spoke to pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work.
- The inspector also spoke to leaders about the curriculum in some other subjects, including history.
- The inspector examined a range of documentation, including leaders' self-evaluation, improvement plans and documentation related to pupils' behaviour.
- The inspector observed pupils' behaviour during lesson visits, around the school and at lunchtime. The inspector held formal and informal discussions with pupils about what it is like to be a pupil at this school.
- To evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding, the inspector: reviewed the single central record; took account of the views of leaders, staff and pupils; and considered the extent to which the school has created an open and positive culture around safeguarding that puts pupils' interests first.
- The inspector considered the responses to Ofsted's online surveys for parents, staff and pupils.

Inspection team

Jean Watt, lead inspector

Ofsted Inspector

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