

Inspection of Wishmore Cross Academy

Alpha Road, Chobham, Woking, Surrey GU24 8NE

Inspection dates:	24 and 25 September 2024
The quality of education	Good
Behaviour and attitudes	Good
Personal development	Good
Leadership and management	Good
Previous inspection grade	Requires improvement

The principal of this school is Abedah Karim. This school is part of LIFT Schools multi-academy trust, which means other people in the trust also have responsibility for running the school. The trust is run by the chief executive officer (CEO), Rebecca Boomer Clark, and overseen by a board of trustees, chaired by David Hall. There is also an executive principal, Andrea George-Samuels, who is responsible for this and one other school.

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils are mostly positive about their school. Those who have attended for longer acknowledge the improvements made since the last inspection. Pupils have a favourable view of their school. They particularly appreciate the patience of staff.

This is an all-boys school for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). They are sometimes off-task or disengaged from learning, but staff deal with this well. Pupils readily acknowledge behaviour is not always perfect. However, those who talked to inspectors said they feel safe here, not least because staff understand them and give them space when needed. One older pupil was blunt when he told an inspector, 'It's a small school for boys with SEND, so obviously there are complications with relationships at times'. Others agreed but were also keen to point out that the school has helped them to become more aware and understanding of the impact of their actions on others.

Staff have appropriately high expectations of what pupils can achieve. They know pupils well, despite the challenges presented by relatively high levels of pupil mobility and the different pathways some follow. Nevertheless, due to the bespoke nature of the curriculum, pupils are now achieving increasingly well by the time they leave the school.

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

Much has been achieved since the school's last inspection. Leaders at all levels are effective in their work to improve the quality of provision. The support and strategic oversight of the multi-academy trust has been central in moving the school forward. Staff appreciate the professional development opportunities available to them. They are overwhelmingly positive, indicating a growing pride in the school and confidence in the direction it is travelling.

The school's curriculum offer has appropriate breadth and is meeting the needs of pupils who all have SEND increasingly well. Vulnerable pupils from disadvantaged backgrounds benefit from targeted support that meets their needs. A significant minority of pupils also access the school's online curriculum offer that is supporting them to re-engage with education. Others are following tailored curriculums that support pupils with additional complex needs well, including those who struggle to attend school.

Central pillars of the curriculum such, as English, mathematics and science, are well established. Pupils who join the school who struggle to read benefit from early identification and targeted support. Pupils generally engage well in learning. However, some staff are not as skilled as others in planning activities that either support or challenge pupils well enough. Occasionally, this is due to the complex needs of pupils. Sometimes it is because of a simple training need, such as delivering the school's reading programme with complete fidelity. The school is aware of this. Crucially, current priorities for improvement focus on the right things.

Pupils' personal development is a high priority here. Improving their self-esteem and sense of self-worth is very much a central part of the school's curriculum offer. Staff

understand that pupils need to be ready to learn before they make meaningful progress in the classroom. Integral to their work is supporting pupils' social and emotional needs, a task that all staff treat seriously and with growing success. A positive consequence is the impact on reducing pupil absence. However, sometimes the delicate balance between supporting vulnerable pupils and directly addressing the varying challenges they present, is not consistent. For example, staff lack consistency in addressing some pupils' use of offensive language.

The school's personal, social and health education (PSHE) programme has been revised. There are a growing range of enrichment opportunities that make pupils' learning more interesting and meaningful. These include learning about different cultures and religions as well as aspects such as celebrating neurodiversity and difference. As a result, pupils recall their learning in PSHE well. A new careers programme is also impacting positively on the school's work to ensure that pupils are better prepared for their next steps on leaving school.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- There is some variability in the way that the curriculum is adapted to meet the needs of individual pupils, including with the teaching of reading. Sometimes this prevents pupils from learning as much as they could because tasks do not build securely enough on what they already know and can do. The school should ensure that all teachers understand how to design and adapt tasks for the pupils they teach, so that this is happening consistently well.
- Sometimes poor language is used by pupils, and staff are not consistent in how they address this. As a result, derogatory language is sometimes allowed to continue. The school should ensure the recent training for staff is routinely put into practice across all phases of the school.

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	138766
Local authority	Surrey
Inspection number	10341725
Type of school	Special
School category	Academy special converter
Age range of pupils	7 to 16
Gender of pupils	Boys
Number of pupils on the school roll	87
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	David Hall
CEO of the trust	Rebecca Boomer Clark
Principal	Andrea George-Samuels (executive principal), Abedah Karim (principal)
Website	www.wishmorecrossacademy.org
Dates of previous inspection	4 and 5 May 2022, under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- Wishmore Cross Academy caters for boys aged from seven to 16 who have social, emotional, mental health and associated needs. All have education, health and care plans.
- The school is part of Lift Schools multi-academy trust, formally known as Academies Enterprise Trust (AET). A board of trustees and officers employed by the trust are responsible for governance.
- A new executive principal and a new principal have joined the school since the last inspection in May 2022.
- The school meets the requirements of the provider access legislation, which requires schools to provide pupils in Years 8 to 13 with information and engagement about approved technical education qualifications and apprenticeships.
- The school uses four unregistered providers.

Information about this inspection

The inspectors carried out this graded inspection under section 5 of the Education Act 2005. During a graded inspection, we grade the school for each of our key judgements (quality of education; behaviour and attitudes; personal development; and leadership and management) and for any relevant provision judgement (early years and/or sixth form provision). Schools receiving a graded inspection from September 2024, will not be given an overall effectiveness grade

- Inspections are a point-in-time evaluation about the quality of a school's education provision.
- Inspectors discussed any continued impact of the pandemic with the school and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- Inspectors held a wide range of meetings with leaders at all levels, as well as teaching and support staff. The lead inspector met with a representative of the multi-academy trust.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: reading, mathematics, science and physical education. For each deep dive, inspectors held discussions about the curriculum, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers, spoke to some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work. Inspectors also discussed the curriculum in some other subjects with leaders.
- To evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding, inspectors: reviewed the single central record; took account of the views of parents, 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.
- Pupils were talked to throughout the inspection to gain their views about the school. An inspector also talked formally to two representative groups of pupils.
- Inspectors considered the views of parents and carers submitted through Ofsted Parent View. An inspector talked to parents on the telephone. The views of staff were also considered through Ofsted's staff survey.

Inspection team

Clive Close, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

Chris Ellison

His Majesty's Inspector

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