

Inspection of The Joseph Whitaker School

Warsop Lane, Rainworth, Mansfield, Nottinghamshire NG21 0AG

Inspection dates:	12 and 13 November 2024
The quality of education	Good
Behaviour and attitudes	Good
Personal development	Good
Leadership and management	Good
Sixth-form provision	Good
Previous inspection grade	Good

The headteacher of this school is Carey Ayres. The school is part of East Midlands Education Trust (EMET), which means other people in the trust also have responsibility for running the school. The trust is run by the chief executive officer (CEO), Robert McDonough, and overseen by a board of trustees, chaired by Ann Witheford.

What is it like to attend this school?

The school is developing a culture that reflects its motto of 'Proud to be me. Proud to be Us.' Pupils are well cared for. They are safe and happy at school. The school is ambitious for everyone to do well in all aspects of school life. Staff are committed to the school's values and aspirations for all pupils.

The school has high expectations of pupils. Pupils learn well in most subjects. The majority of pupils behave well. Relationships are polite and cooperative. In lessons, most pupils focus on their learning and learn well. Pupils appreciate the school's priority of nurturing respect for difference.

Sixth-form students are proud of the school. They serve as positive role models for younger pupils. They appreciate the support and care they receive.

The school nurtures pupils' confidence, resilience and independence very well. Pupils benefit from a wide range of extra-curricular activities, including a variety of clubs and sports. Pupils gain from many memorable experiences, including trips and residential visits. Many value the performing arts opportunities, including the annual stage production.

Most parents and carers have positive views about the school. However, some parents do not fully appreciate the school's expectations of behaviour for their children.

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

The school has developed a broad and balanced curriculum that provides Year 10 and Year 11 pupils with the opportunity to gain qualifications in subjects that reflect national expectations. Younger pupils learn well across a range of national curriculum subjects. The school ensures that subject curriculums are ambitious. In the majority of subjects, the school identifies the key knowledge that pupils need to learn and when. For example, in art and design, pupils build their knowledge of artists, movements, periods and styles. They develop their expertise in a range of techniques using varied media to become accomplished artists. However, this ambition is not seen in all subjects.

Teachers have strong subject knowledge. They make regular checks on pupils' understanding to ensure that activities build on prior learning. This enables pupils to learn and remember over time and deepen their understanding. However, at times there are some inconsistencies in this practice across school.

The school has high expectations of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). Leaders identify pupils' specific needs accurately. Staff carefully adapt their teaching to enable these pupils to learn well. Leaders seek external support when needed. Pupils with SEND learn the same curriculum as their peers.

The school is developing a positive culture of reading. Pupils who are at an early stage of reading are supported to become fluent and confident readers. Staff are trained to

provide specific support, for example to deliver age-appropriate phonics. The school is developing pupils' love of reading.

The school has appropriately high expectations of pupils' attendance. Pupils' overall attendance has improved since the COVID-19 pandemic. Pupils understand the school's high expectations for behaviour. Pupils' behaviour is largely positive. Most pupils engage with their learning well. The school has a calm and orderly feeling. However, some pupils' attitudes to learning are not as positive as they could be.

Pupils' personal development is a strength. Leaders ensure that the personal, social, health and economic (PSHE) education offer is carefully structured. Pupils benefit from opportunities to learn about physical and mental health. They learn about age-appropriate relationships and sex education. They are taught the importance of equality, diversity, inclusion and respect. Staff promote pupils' moral and social development very well. Careers provision is strong. Pupils gain from many positive work-related learning opportunities. They receive appropriate advice and guidance. They are prepared well for their next steps.

The school sets high expectations for its sixth-form students. Students benefit from carefully thought through subject curriculums that serve to build their learning very well. They are taught well by knowledgeable and skilled staff. Students apply themselves purposefully. They appreciate and meet the school's high expectations. Pastoral care is positive. Students value the high-quality support offered. Sixth-form students are very well prepared for their next steps in education, training or employment.

Leaders, including those with responsibility for governance, know the school well. They know the school's strength and priorities for development. They continue to build on the school's good quality of provision. The trust provides appropriate support and challenge.

Staff are proud to work at the school. Staff morale is positive. Leaders are mindful of staff workload and well-being. There is a genuine team spirit among staff.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- In some subjects, the school does not identify all of the key knowledge that pupils need to learn and when. Consequently, the school's implementation of the curriculum in these subjects is inconsistent and teachers cannot make the necessary checks on pupils' understanding and build on their learning. As a result, pupils do not learn as well as they could in some subjects. The school must ensure that all subject

curriculums are equally ambitious, enabling all pupils to know, remember and do more over time.

- The school's approach to managing behaviour is, at times, not consistently implemented. Consequently, a minority of pupils' attitudes to learning are not as positive as they could be. The school's high expectations of behaviour are not understood and appreciated by all parents. The school should ensure that the behaviour policy is consistently well implemented, that all parents understand these high expectations, and that the attitudes of some pupils are nurtured to be as positive as those of their peers.

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	137628
Local authority	Nottinghamshire County Council
Inspection number	10347518
Type of school	Secondary Comprehensive
School category	Academy converter
Age range of pupils	11 to 18
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in sixth-form provision	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	1,338
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	148
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Ann Witheford
CEO of the trust	Robert McDonough
Headteacher	Carey Ayres
Website	www.josephwhitaker.org
Date of previous inspection	6 March 2019, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The school is part of East Midlands Education Trust. The chair of trustees took up post in September 2024. The trust board delegates some of its responsibilities to a local governing body. A new chair of governors was elected in September 2024.
- The headteacher took up post in September 2020.
- The school uses four registered and three unregistered alternative provisions.
- 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.

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.
- This was the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. Inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with the school and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- Inspectors met with the headteacher, senior leaders and trust officers. The lead inspector met with two trustees and representatives from the local governing body, including the chair of governors.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: mathematics, science, art and design, geography and music. For each deep dive, inspectors held discussions about the curriculum, visited sample lessons, spoke with teachers, spoke with some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of their work.
- Inspectors considered the curriculum and visited lessons in a range of other subjects, including, English, history, sociology, food technology, modern foreign languages, PSHE, physical education and business studies.
- To review the effectiveness of safeguarding, inspectors: reviewed the single central record; took account of the views of leaders, staff and pupils; considered the extent to which the school has created an open and positive culture around safeguarding that puts pupils' interests first.
- Inspectors considered the views of parents submitted via Ofsted Parent View, including free-text comments. They considered correspondence received during the inspection. They reviewed the responses to Ofsted's survey of school staff and pupils.

Inspection team

Chris Davies, lead inspector	His Majesty's Inspector
Derek Hobbs	Ofsted Inspector
Alison Davies	Ofsted Inspector
Jules Gordon	Ofsted Inspector
Gulbanu Kader	Ofsted Inspector

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Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

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Textphone: 0161 618 8524
E: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
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