

Inspection of Weatherfield Academy

Brewers Hill Road, Dunstable, Bedfordshire LU6 1AF

Inspection dates:	5 November and 6 November 2024 and 7 February 2025
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 head of school is Liam Meenan. The school is a single academy converter, which means other people have responsibility for the running of the school. The school is overseen by a board of trustees chaired by Jacqui Hunt.

What is it like to attend this school?

Weatherfield Academy is a caring and happy place. Pupils are warmly greeted each morning. They settle quickly to the tasks adults have prepared for them. Adults take time to check whether pupils are ready to learn. They make timely interventions if pupils require any support. Pupils appreciate the help they receive. Nurturing relationships between pupils and staff ensure a calm and productive start to the day.

The school has high expectations for pupils' achievements, both academic and personal. Pupils are eager to learn and find out new things. All pupils have special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). Knowledgeable staff ensure that pupils' barriers to learning are overcome. Everyone commits to helping pupils become, 'the best person they can be'.

Pupils relish the variety of opportunities on offer. Staff help pupils to find their place in the community. For example, they provide opportunities for pupils to work on the school farm or allotments. Pupils can become members of the signing choir and perform to local organisations.

The school helps pupils to foster friendships. Pupils value the relationships they form and there is a palpable family feel to the school. Many parents agree. They use words such as 'flourish' and 'thrive' to describe their child's experiences of school. Pupils willingly cooperate and share their learning with one another.

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

Since the previous inspection, the school has continued to develop the curriculum in all subjects. The school has ensured that the growing range of pupils' needs has been carefully catered for in the design of the curriculum. The curriculum lays out clearly the knowledge and skills that develop pupils' learning over time. Preparation for adulthood and life beyond the school threads through pupils' experiences. Teaching is tailored for each pupil. To achieve this, pupils follow different curriculum pathways. These include opportunities to study subjects which develop their practical skills. For example, horticulture, cooking and childcare. Working with multi-disciplinary teams, pupils' individual targets carefully inform how the curriculum is adapted. This means pupils build the skills they need for success in later life. They are well prepared for their next steps.

Teachers generally have a secure knowledge of the curriculum content. They make skilful use of revisiting key knowledge. From key stage 3 through to the sixth form, teachers question pupils to check that important knowledge is remembered. They ensure that pupils secure their knowledge by building on what they have learned before. However, in a few subjects, teachers are less secure in what pupils need to know and remember. This means sometimes, planned activities do not build on what pupils already know. On these occasions pupils do not progress through the curriculum as well as they could.

Reading is a high priority. The school ensures that pupils at an early stage of learning to read develop their phonics knowledge and use their phonics skills. Staff teach the school's phonics programme skilfully. Pupils read books that help them to practise the sounds they know. The school promotes reading for pleasure successfully. Pupils enjoy access to a wide range of books and reading material. Many pupils develop well as fluent and confident readers.

Pupils behave well around the school, whether in class or at playtimes. The school has established a safe and respectful culture. Staff and pupils have warm and trusting relationships. Staff know their pupils well. They respond sensitively should anyone require closer attention and help. Pupils enjoy coming to school. This is reflected in their regular attendance.

Pupils benefit from wider experiences to support their personal development. These experiences are central to building pupils' life skills. Roles within the school provide opportunities for pupils to be leaders and members of teams. Pupils use their voice through the school council or working as a fairtrade monitor. They participate in community activities that helps to develop pupils' confidence and independence. Pupils receive guidance and information about the world of work. In the sixth form, there are increasing opportunities to visit local colleges and business groups to make informed decisions about their future. The school provides opportunities for students to gain functional skills and vocational qualifications to help them achieve their aspirations.

The trustees take responsibility for the governance of the school. They receive information from school leaders informing them about actions to improve the school. However, sometimes, trustees have not ensured that they have all of the information they need to check the impact of the effectiveness of the curriculum. This means they do not have a strong enough grasp or oversight of the school's performance.

Safeguarding

The inspection was suspended to give the school an opportunity to resolve issues with safeguarding. Inspectors returned to gather additional evidence and judged arrangements for safeguarding to be effective.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- In a few subjects, teachers do not have a confident understanding of the key knowledge that pupils need to know. This means the activities they prepare are not fully effective in building pupils' knowledge step by step. The school should ensure that staff develop the expertise they require to deliver the curriculum, ensuring that pupils make the strongest progress across all subjects.
- Trustees do not have a secure enough understanding about the impact of leaders' decisions to improve the school. This means that sometimes, they are not able to hold

leaders to account for the improvement of the school. The trust should ensure that those in governance positions develop further their knowledge and skills to consistently ensure that the school's work is highly effective.

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	137896
Local authority	Central Bedfordshire
Inspection number	10371279
Type of school	Special
School category	Academy special converter
Age range of pupils	7 to 19
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in sixth-form provision	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	166
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	52
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Jacqui Hunt
Headteacher	Liam Meenan (Head of School)
Website	www.weatherfield.beds.sch.uk
Dates of previous inspection	13 and 14 June 2023, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- All pupils who attend Weatherfield Academy have an education, health and care plan. The school provides education for pupils with moderate learning difficulties.
- The head of school was appointed in September 2024.
- 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 qualification and apprenticeships.
- The school makes use of two registered and three unregistered alternative provisions.

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.
- The inspection started on 5 November 2024. It was suspended in line with [Ofsted inspections and visits: Deferring, pausing and gathering additional evidence](#) policy to give the school an opportunity to resolve issues with safeguarding. Inspectors returned on 7 February 2025 to complete the inspection by gathering additional evidence on whether safeguarding arrangements are effective.
- Inspectors discussed any continued impact of the pandemic with the school and have taken that into account in their evaluation.
- To evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding, the inspectors: 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.
- Inspectors met with the head of school, other senior leaders, subject leaders and staff. The lead inspector also met with those responsible for governance, including the chair of the trust and some trustees.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: early reading/English, mathematics, personal, social, health and economic education (PSHE) and religious 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. They visited lessons and looked at samples of pupils' work in these subjects.
- Inspectors observed pupils' behaviour at the start and end of the school day, during lessons and at social times.
- Inspectors took account of the responses to Ofsted Parent View, including the free-text comments. They also considered the responses to Ofsted's survey for staff.
- Inspectors considered the views of pupils through discussions held during the inspection and through responses to Ofsted's survey for pupils.

Inspection team

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His Majesty's Inspector

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