

# Inspection of The Academy of Woodlands

Woodlands Road, Gillingham, Kent ME7 2DU

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Inspection dates:	25 and 26 March 2025
The quality of education	<b>Good</b>
Behaviour and attitudes	<b>Good</b>
Personal development	<b>Good</b>
Leadership and management	<b>Good</b>
Early years provision	<b>Good</b>
Previous inspection grade	Good

The head of school of this school is Chloe Brown. This school is part of Rivermead Inclusive Trust, which means other people in the trust also have responsibility for running the school. The trust is run by the chief executive officer, Tina Lovey, and overseen by a board of trustees, chaired by Justin Stuart. There is also an executive headteacher, Emma Poad, who is responsible for this school and three others.

## **What is it like to attend this school?**

Pupils are positive about their school and the opportunities it provides. They are proud of their work. Older pupils talk confidently about the things that have changed for the better in recent times. Pupils now behave well. Staff deal with occasional unkind behaviour effectively.

Inspectors' classroom visits across all phases of the school showed that aspirations for what pupils can achieve are appropriately high. Pupils themselves confirm a renewed sense of purpose about learning. Pupils from all backgrounds, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), are now making much better progress through the curriculum than in the recent past.

This is a large school. Pupils describe it as a happy and safe community. Initiatives such as cross-year-group communities at lunchtime provide opportunities for pupils to socialise outside of their immediate peer group. They enjoy a wide range of extra-curricular activities that help develop character and resilience. A messy play club sits alongside a range of others, including opportunities to develop music, drama and sporting talents. As a result, pupils are equally as proud of their achievements on and off the pitch and the stage, as they are of their academic progress.

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

This is a school that has seen much change in a relatively short period of time. New leaders at all levels have refreshed the school's curriculum, policies and procedures. The oversight of the multi-academy trust has brought new direction while providing firm foundations after a period of turbulence. Values have been refreshed and are integral to the experiences of pupils, families and staff. Inspectors' discussions with parents and carers and the relatively small response to the Ofsted Parent View survey show that parents are mostly very positive about the school. However, a minority are not as positive as they might be. The school knows this. Leaders at all levels understand that more needs to be done to showcase the excellent work underway to enhance all aspects of provision at The Academy of Woodlands.

The school's curriculum is ever evolving. Pupils enjoy learning new things. Most can make connections between the things they already know and new learning. When this is not the case, staff are on hand to clarify understanding or reframe tasks. Pupils' books show appropriately high expectations for all, including the high proportion of pupils from disadvantaged backgrounds. Subjects such as science and mathematics challenge pupils to think deeply about why they have arrived at different answers to the same question. Pupils also enjoy being challenged in other areas, including in their outside learning sessions or when completing team 'missions' as part of the school's personal development programme.

The school's work to ensure that pupils can read with age-appropriate fluency and understanding is secure. Staff and pupils have access to the right resources. Checks of pupils' progress in early reading and additional help for those who struggle is increasingly

successful. However, some staff need a little more support to ensure that they are delivering the school's phonics programme as precisely as they might.

The school's pastoral care and its work to provide a stable and caring environment for those with additional vulnerabilities are strengths. Staff work tirelessly to provide a nurturing environment where all pupils, no matter what their backgrounds, can flourish. The school's work to support pupils' understanding of diversity, equality and inclusion is having a positive impact. Outreach work with families and with outside agencies is well established and boosts pupils' well-being. Central to this is the school's tireless work to ensure that pupils attend school as often as they should. Rates of attendance are rising. However, absence is still a barrier for some pupils, impacting on their learning over time.

The school's large early years provision ensures that children are increasingly better prepared for their move to Year 1. Close liaison between staff helps to promote children's learning. The school's work to identify and support the growing number of pupils with SEND starts here. This work is largely effective because specialist staff, some new to the school, ensure that the right provision is in place as pupils' needs change over time.

Staff have positive views of the school. Those in positions of governance are also enthusiastic about the direction of travel. Members of the local advisory board and officers from the multi-academy trust understand their roles and responsibilities clearly. The impact of this is a rapidly improving school that is providing a good quality of education for pupils, no matter what their backgrounds or barriers to learning.

## **Safeguarding**

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

## **What does the school need to do to improve?**

### **(Information for the school and appropriate authority)**

- Not all staff implement the school's phonics programme as precisely as they could. This impacts on the progress some pupils are making on their journey to become fluent readers. The school needs to ensure that all staff who teach phonics are experts so that the school's chosen phonics programme is delivered with complete fidelity.
- Rates of absence are too high. Some pupils are falling behind because they do not attend school often enough. Work in this area is ongoing and beginning to have a positive impact on improving attendance. However, the school needs to redouble its efforts to reduce pupil absence, so that all pupils can benefit fully from the good quality of provision the school offers.

## 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

<b>Unique reference number</b>	139493
<b>Local authority</b>	Medway
<b>Inspection number</b>	10341739
<b>Type of school</b>	Primary
<b>School category</b>	Academy converter
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	2 to 11
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	792
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	Board of trustees
<b>Chair of trust</b>	Justin Stuart
<b>CEO of the trust</b>	Tina Lovey
<b>Headteacher</b>	Chloe Brown (Head of school) Emma Poad (Executive headteacher)
<b>Website</b>	<a href="http://www.theacademyofwoodlands.co.uk">www.theacademyofwoodlands.co.uk</a>
<b>Dates of previous inspection</b>	10 and 11 December 2019, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

## Information about this school

- The school joined Rivermead Inclusive Trust in September 2022, having previously been a standalone academy convertor called Woodlands Primary School.
- The school has a nursery provision that caters for children aged two and upwards.
- There have been a number of changes in the school's leadership team over the last five years.
- The school does not presently use alternative provision.

## 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 held a wide range of meetings with leaders at all levels, as well as teaching and support staff. The lead inspector held two separate meetings with four executive officers of the multi-academy trust and with the chair and one other member of the school's local advisory board.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: early reading, mathematics, history, geography and science. 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. Inspectors also talked formally to two representative groups of pupils.
- Inspectors considered the views of parents submitted through Ofsted Parent View. Inspectors also talked to parents at the start of the first day of the inspection. The views of staff were also considered through Ofsted's staff survey.

## Inspection team

Clive Close, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

Caroline Clarke

Ofsted Inspector

Jody Murphy

Ofsted Inspector

Kate Owbridge

Ofsted Inspector

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