

Inspection of Woodlands Academy of Learning

Bloxwich Road North, Short Heath, Willenhall, West Midlands WV12 5PR

Inspection dates: 13 and 14 March 2023

Overall effectiveness	Good
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The quality of education	Good
Behaviour and attitudes	Good
Personal development	Good
Leadership and management	Good
Early years provision	Good
Previous inspection grade	Good

What is it like to attend this school?

Woodlands Academy of Learning is a happy and welcoming school where staff care for pupils well. There is a strong sense of community. Everyone at the school is valued and included, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND).

Pupils feel safe in school. They know that adults care for them and that there is always a trusted member of staff to talk to. Pupils understand what bullying is, and say that it does sometimes happen, but trust adults to sort it out.

Leaders and staff have a clear vision for the school. They have high expectations of pupils. Pupils work hard and concentrate on their work in lessons. They are calm and sensible around the school. Relationships between staff and pupils are very positive.

Pupils benefit from a wide range of opportunities that enrich the curriculum. These promote pupils' confidence and sense of responsibility. Pupils can take on leadership roles, such as school councillors and learning ambassadors. As part of the learning ambassador role, pupils (who gain the role following a class vote) lead assemblies on current issues. Pupils can also attend a range of after-school clubs, including cheerleading, judo and basketball.

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

Leaders, including those responsible for governance, want the best for every pupil. Current pupils make strong progress in reading and mathematics. Efforts to help anyone who falls behind are well considered and are demonstrating positive effect. However, last year, significant staff absence delayed some of this work. As a result, some Year 6 pupils did not achieve well in last year's key stage 2 tests, in 2022.

Children settle quickly into the early years because staff care about them and are attentive to their needs. Staff have a clear understanding of how young children learn and of the support that they need. Reading is very well led across the school. The school's phonics programme is well planned and gets pupils off to a good start in reading. Staff work skilfully with children in the early years to develop speech and language. Activities are carefully considered to promote a love of reading. Well-trained staff use good-quality materials to teach the sounds letters make and reading. This continues through key stage 1, and beyond for those who need it. As a result, pupils become increasingly confident and fluent readers.

Leaders have put together a curriculum which is ambitious in its scope and range. In most subjects, they have thought carefully about the key knowledge and skills pupils should learn, from early years to Year 6. They have set out the order that this learning should follow. This supports pupils well to know and remember more. Teachers help pupils to remember content long term. For example, in mathematics, they use flashbacks, daily recaps, 'making it stick' questions and weekly challenges

with reasoning problems. In English, the curriculum is carefully broken down into component steps in reading, grammar and writing. However, in a small number of foundation subjects, although leaders have planned an ambitious curriculum, some of the decisions around the ordering of curriculum components do not enable pupils to remember learning in the long term. For example, in history, leaders introduce some concepts at a time when pupils are too young to engage fully with the learning.

Teachers have strong subject knowledge. They explain new learning to pupils clearly. They use assessment information well to close any gaps in learning. Teachers check pupils' understanding during lessons and address anything pupils have misunderstood quickly.

There are robust systems and procedures in place for the accurate identification and assessment of pupils with SEND. Staff receive regular training on how to support pupils with SEND. As a result of this, pupils with SEND participate fully in lessons, and have work and support matched to their needs.

Pupils' personal development threads through all learning in school. Leaders ensure that lessons in various subjects promote pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development well. These lessons help pupils understand how to care for themselves and how to maintain healthy relationships with others. They learn about different faiths and learn that it is ok to be different. This work is preparing pupils for life in modern Britain.

Governors know the school well. They want pupils to succeed, and hold leaders to account. Leaders are aware of the workload pressures on staff and carefully consider how they can help with staff's well-being. However, a significant minority of staff feel that leaders could be more mindful about workload when developing and implementing policies and procedures.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

There is a strong culture of safeguarding at the school. All staff are confident in knowing what to do if they have concerns about a pupil. Leaders ensure that there are accurate records of any concerns raised by staff. They discuss these concerns in a timely fashion and take action quickly when needed. In some cases, this may include working with external agencies to support and help families.

Leaders make sure that pupils get the information they need to keep themselves safe. This includes being aware of their personal safety and appropriate relationships.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Leaders have not ensured that the curriculum is coherently sequenced in some subjects. As a result, pupils do not build on their knowledge successfully from one year to the next. Leaders should ensure that there is suitable progression of knowledge and skills in all subjects to enable pupils to successfully build on their learning in all subjects.
- Some staff express concerns about workload. This impacts on staff's well-being. Leaders should ensure that they are realistic and constructive in the way that they manage the workload of staff.

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](#)' refers to those pupils who attract government pupil premium funding: pupils claiming free school meals at any point in the last six years and pupils in care or who left care through adoption or another formal route.

School details

Unique reference number	138343
Local authority	Walsall
Inspection number	10242133
Type of school	Primary
School category	Academy converter
Age range of pupils	3 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	455
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governing body	Robert Lawrence
Headteacher	Tamsin Newton
Website	www.woodlands.walsall.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	11 July 2017, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The school operates a before- and after-school club each day, which is run by the school.
- The school does not use any alternative providers.

Information about this inspection

The inspectors carried out this graded inspection under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

- This was the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. Inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with leaders and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- Inspectors held meetings with the headteacher, governors and other leaders.
- The inspectors carried out deep dives in reading, mathematics, English, science and history. Inspection activities in these subjects included lesson visits, discussions with staff and pupils, meeting with subject leaders and work scrutiny. An inspector also observed pupils reading.

- Inspectors scrutinised a wide range of documents, including those related to safeguarding arrangements, behaviour and attendance. Inspectors also reviewed the school's evaluation of its own performance and the school's development plans.
- Inspectors talked to staff about their role in keeping pupils safe.
- Inspectors held informal and formal discussions with pupils and observed lunchtime and breaktime.
- Inspectors reviewed responses to Ofsted's online survey, Ofsted Parent View, including additional free-text comments. They also took account of responses to Ofsted's online staff and pupil questionnaires.

Inspection team

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