

Woodkirk Academy

Rein Road, Wakefield, West Yorkshire, WF3 1JQ

Inspection dates 13–14 November 2013

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Not previously inspected	
	This inspection:	Good	2
Achievement of pupils		Good	2
Quality of teaching		Good	2
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Good	2
Leadership and management		Good	2

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school.

- Standards at the end of Year 11 are well above average. This represents good progress over time. Standards in art and mathematics are especially high. In these subjects, students achieve outstandingly well.
- Achievement in the sixth form has improved in recent years. Most students make at least good progress. Some achieve outstandingly well, particularly across Year 12, and in vocational subjects.
- Teaching is usually good, with examples of outstanding practice. Teachers are fully committed to creating a positive climate for learning. As a result, students achieve well.
- The quality of care and welfare is of a high standard. Parents, staff and students are unreservedly positive about both behaviour and safety. Students say how much they take pride in academy life.
- The headteacher, governors, and key leaders and managers are ambitious on the part of all young people. They consistently communicate high expectations.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Not enough students make more than expected progress in English across Years 7–11. The most able students do not always attain GCSE A*–A grades in some subjects.
- The achievement of some students who receive funding from the pupil premium, is not rising fast enough, particularly in English and mathematics.
- Some teaching requires improvement. This is especially so where teachers do not enable some students to develop fully understanding, and where some do not check carefully enough the progress that all students make in lessons.
- Some aspects of the academy's performance are not checked rigorously enough against national expectations. The impact of the pupil premium and Year 7 catch-up funding, is not analysed in sufficient detail.
- Governors are not always provided with detailed information about how well all groups of students are achieving.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 48 lessons, of which four were joint observations with senior leaders. In addition, the inspection team made a number of short visits to tutor groups, observed adults working with students in small groups out of lessons, and visited one assembly.
- Meetings were held with four groups of students, governors, the school's improvement partner, and school staff, including senior and middle managers.
- When planning the inspection, there were no responses accessible to the on-line questionnaire (Parent View). During the inspection 99 responses became available and all were taken into account. Inspectors reviewed one e-mail received from a parent and 77 staff responses to a questionnaire.
- Inspectors observed the academy's work and looked at a number of documents, including the academy's own data on current students' progress, planning and monitoring documentation, minutes of governors' meetings, records relating to behaviour and attendance, and documents pertaining to safeguarding. Inspectors looked at students' work in lessons, and analysed a sample of Year 11 English books in detail.

Inspection team

Andrew Swallow Lead inspector	Additional Inspector
Clive Hurren	Additional Inspector
Christine Kennedy	Additional Inspector
James McGrath	Additional Inspector
Janet Renou	Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- Woodkirk Academy is a much larger than average sized secondary school.
- The proportion of students for whom the school receives the pupil premium is below the national average. The pupil premium is additional funding for those pupils who are known to be eligible for free school meals, children from service families and those who are looked after by the local authority.
- One in five students is from a minority ethnic background, but very few speak English as an additional language.
- The proportion of students supported through school action is below that found nationally. The proportions of students supported at school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs, are also below average.
- The academy meets the government's current floor standards which set the minimum expectations for students' attainment and progress.
- The academy enters students early for GCSE examinations.
- No students follow courses in other schools or colleges. A small proportion follows vocational courses at the academy.
- Woodkirk Academy converted to become an academy school in September 2011. When Woodkirk High Specialist Science School was last inspected by OfSTED, it was judged to be good.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Increase the achievement of students across Years 7 to 11, particularly those making more than expected progress, in English, and raise the numbers of students attaining the highest GCSE grades across most subjects, by:
 - ensuring the most able students are challenged appropriately in all lessons
 - providing more time in lessons for students to deepen understanding through applying their new found knowledge and skills in more depth
 - reducing the achievement margins between students supported by the pupil premium funding and their peers.
- Between Years 7 and 11, improve the quality of teaching even further so that much more is outstanding, and students develop a real love of learning, by:
 - ensuring that all students derive pleasure in developing fully their ideas and sharing them with each other
 - ensuring all teachers systematically check all students' understanding in lessons, adapting work to take good account of their varying abilities, so that they learn exceptionally well.
- Refine present arrangements to check the work of the academy, by:
 - making more rigorous comparisons with national achievement outcomes and expectations
 - analysing in more detail the impact of the pupil premium and Year 7 catch-up funding, to determine whether additional actions are worthwhile
 - providing governors with detailed information about the achievement of all groups of students.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils is good

- The proportion of students achieving five or more GCSEs grades A* to C, including English and mathematics, is constantly well above average. This means that, over time, students make good progress, given their generally above average starting points. As a result, their achievement is good.
- By the end of Year 11, more students make expected progress than seen nationally in both English and mathematics. In mathematics, students achieve outstandingly well, with a high proportion going beyond national expectations. In English, the number of students making better than expected progress is below the national figure.
- The vast majority of students achieve well across most subjects in Years 7 to 11. Achievement in art and design is especially strong. Inspection evidence shows that many students develop good speaking and listening skills, read widely and fluently, and write confidently in different scenarios, and for different audiences. Students' mathematical skills are equally well honed, and used to especially good effect in science and technology.
- The most able students make largely expected rates of progress. They reach national standards in many subjects, but not enough go on to attain the highest GCSE grades in all subjects. The small number of students entered historically for early GCSE examinations, has not limited the attainment of the highest grades.
- The small proportions of students studying vocational qualifications achieve very well.
- Almost all groups of students, including the small proportion from minority ethnic backgrounds, the very few for whom English is not their first language, disabled students and those with special educational needs make good progress. This is because their specific needs are astutely identified from the onset, and additional support is of a good quality.
- The achievement of some students for whom the school receives the pupil premium funding, is not rising as fast as it might. Although all teachers have appropriate information about these students, work is not always tailored to their needs in lessons. As a consequence, the margins between the progress that they make in English and mathematics, in relation to their peers, are not closing fast enough, over time. On average, they attain a GCSE grade lower than their peers in English and mathematics by the end of Year 11, as seen nationally. The impact of any additional support made available through pupil premium funding, over time, is unclear. This is because senior leaders have not assessed in detail, to date, the effectiveness of actions taken.
- The school generally promotes equality of opportunity well across Years 7 to 11, ensuring that all groups of students have access to good teaching, and providing well-conceived additional support for those at risk of falling behind. For example, pupil premium and Year 7 'catch up' funding has been used to provide more one-to-one specialist teaching and learning opportunities in English and mathematics, to enhance students' confidence through bespoke mentoring and, where necessary, counselling, arrangements, and to purchase new resources such as 'Accelerated Reader,' to boost students reading skills. The differences that these individual actions make, have yet to be assessed in full.
- Sixth form students are increasingly well catered for, and attain at least above average standards in many subjects at A level, and well above average AS outcomes, overall. They attain high outcomes in vocational and applied courses. The vast majority of students develop competent research skills, working by themselves and intently in many lessons. Almost all, consequently, continue successfully into higher education, training, or employment.

The quality of teaching is good

- Teaching is usually good across Years 7 to 11, with examples of outstanding practice, particularly in art and design and mathematics. As a result, most students make good progress and achieve well.

- In the sixth form, teaching is never less than good, and particularly strong in vocational and applied subjects, and in Year 12 lessons. For example, in a Year 12 chemistry lesson, students were eager to research which compounds would make the best fuel for a Ferrari motor car. Equally, Year 13 sociology students were empowered to share views on neo-Marxism, and deepen their understanding of the London riots from this perspective.
- Across the school, teachers are very conscientious and highly committed. They have good subject knowledge, keep themselves up-dated about new developments, and readily share their expertise with each other. The vast majority have high expectations and plan lessons to interest learners of all ages and abilities. They create excellent relationships in lessons so that most students enjoy their learning.
- A range of interesting activities and experiences enthuse students across the curriculum. For example, in a Year 7 art and design lesson on fine-line painting, students were stimulated by Arcimboldo's fruit and vegetable pictures, persevering very well over their individual paintings to re-create similar effects, with good attention to painting line and blending colours. Year 10 students were similarly engrossed in finding areas of compound shapes, using circles, in mathematics. This was largely because of the constant challenge that the well-matched activities brought about, and the well-judged time that students were afforded to work things out for themselves.
- In the most effective lessons, teachers routinely check students' understanding, intervening as required with notable impact on the quality of learning. Increasingly, they provide opportunities for students to discuss and question. In scenarios that require accurate mathematical understanding they ensure students are confident in measuring and calculation skills, and in representing key data in graphs and charts.
- In a small number of lessons across the school, teaching requires improvement. This is where students are provided with the same work regardless of ability, and where some teachers do not check sufficiently on their progress, missing opportunities to adapt activities to meet their changing needs. Some teachers interrupt students' learning too frequently. On these occasions, they do not provide sufficient time for all students to derive pleasure in developing fully their ideas, and sharing them with each other.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- Around the academy, students' behaviour is always good, and often exemplary. Students are polite and courteous to adults and visitors. Parents indicate how much their children enjoy coming to school, and appreciate the different extra-curricular activities and visits on offer. Students say how much they value the time that all adults devote to solving their problems, and contribute to their personal development.
- The quality of pastoral care and welfare arrangements is outstanding. Students indicate that they always feel safe in the school.
- Well-planned assemblies, and work in tutor time, ensure that most students are acutely aware of unsafe situations and show confidence in dealing with them, should they occur. They are assured in talking about cyber and homophobic bullying, and are active in preventing bullying from happening on a daily basis.
- Pastoral staff secure very effectively the well-being of students whose circumstances may render them vulnerable. Attendance is well above average, and exclusions are low.
- In lessons, students' behaviour is almost always positive. They do not consistently display a thirst for knowledge and a love of learning in lessons where they are frequently interrupted by teachers, and are not provided with sufficient time to develop fully their ideas, and hear the views of their peers.

The leadership and management are good

- The headteacher is aspirational for all students. He has created an atmosphere in which students and adults relate very well indeed to one another. Students are fiercely proud of their school.
- Leaders and managers across the academy share the headteacher's ambition, communicate high expectations, and are thoroughly committed to achieving the highest outcomes. Staff demonstrate high levels of respect for students and colleagues, and ensure safeguarding arrangements meet statutory requirements.
- Effective partnerships exist within the Leeds Partnership of schools, and the local Teaching Alliance, to support the continued development of teaching and learning. In addition, an external consultant, brokered by the local authority, provides an objective view of the work of the academy.
- The performance management of all staff is well organised. Appraisal procedures are thorough, and identify precisely individual's development needs. Training opportunities draw on the experience and expertise of staff within, and beyond, the academy. The headteacher makes the right decisions about teachers' movement up the salary scale, on the basis of secure information about the quality of their teaching.
- The academy's curriculum meets most students' needs successfully. Arrangements to support their move from primary to secondary school, especially for those whose literacy and numeracy skills are not as well developed, are highly effective. Disabled pupils and those with special educational needs are well catered for, both in and out of lessons. There is a wide range of academic courses, underpinned by the academy's former science specialisms, and a small number of successful vocational opportunities delivered on the academy's site. Extensive sporting, musical and performing experiences, and an abundance of extra-curricular activities, make strong contributions to students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. They support effectively the school's drive to promote equality of opportunity and to tackle immediately any discrimination that may arise.
- Parents are wholeheartedly supportive of the academy's work. A very high proportion believes that staff respond efficiently to any concerns that may arise, and say that they would readily recommend the academy to another family.
- Some aspects of the academy's performance are not checked rigorously enough against national expectations. As a result, self-evaluation is sometimes over-generous. It does not always take into sufficient consideration the latest national achievement outcomes, and expectations.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - Governors are very conscientious, and committed to delivering the best provision for all students. While they are keen to understand how well the academy is doing, and are confident in challenging the academy's senior leaders, they do not receive enough detailed information about the academy's performance to do so effectively. For example, they are unclear about how well different groups of students are achieving, in comparison with nationally published information.
 - Although governors have authorised additional staffing for small groups, as part of the allocation of pupil premium and Year 7 'catch-up' funding, they have not yet reviewed in detail the impact of these arrangements on improving students' achievement, and ensuring that they achieve as well as other students.
 - Arrangements for the annual review of the headteacher's performance are appropriate. In addition, governors are aware of the salaries of all staff, together with decisions taken about individual teachers' applications for promotion. They have a comprehensive picture of the quality of teaching, and what the academy is doing to ensure that even more is outstanding.

What inspection judgements mean

School		
Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	An outstanding school is highly effective in delivering outcomes that provide exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs. This ensures that pupils are very well equipped for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 2	Good	A good school is effective in delivering outcomes that provide well for all its pupils' needs. Pupils are well prepared for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 3	Requires improvement	A school that requires improvement is not yet a good school, but it is not inadequate. This school will receive a full inspection within 24 months from the date of this inspection.
Grade 4	Inadequate	<p>A school that has serious weaknesses is inadequate overall and requires significant improvement but leadership and management are judged to be Grade 3 or better. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p> <p>A school that requires special measures is one where the school is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the school's leaders, managers or governors have not demonstrated that they have the capacity to secure the necessary improvement in the school. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p>

School details

Unique reference number	137383
Local authority	Leeds
Inspection number	427304

This inspection of the school was carried out under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

Type of school	Secondary
School category	Academy converter
Age range of pupils	11–18
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in the sixth form	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	1841
Of which, number on roll in sixth form	311
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Steve Alleston
Headteacher	Jonathan White
Date of previous school inspection	No previous inspection
Telephone number	0113 8873600
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