

Inspection of a good school: Westfield Academy

Tolpits Lane, Watford, Hertfordshire WD18 6NS

Inspection dates:

10–11 December 2019

Outcome

Westfield Academy continues to be a good school.

What is it like to attend this school?

Leaders challenge pupils to 'believe, strive, achieve'. This vision is making a difference to how pupils approach their learning. The 'Westfield Way' rules for learning lay out leaders' high expectations. Pupils want to learn and their behaviour is good.

Pupils tell us that they enjoy school and feel safe. They are proud of their school building. They say it helps them to move calmly around the school. They trust staff to sort things out if they have a problem and say that bullying is rare.

Positive relationships between staff and pupils help pupils to be more thoughtful, kind and respectful to others. One pupil said, 'The teachers care.' Pupils are taught well and they value the support their teachers give them.

The school offers pupils plenty of things to do outside of their lessons. School trips and clubs, such as sports, music, dance and chess, are well attended. The Duke of Edinburgh's Award is popular with older pupils. Pupils are helped to make healthy choices. 'The Westfield Mile', a daily walk for key stage 3 pupils, helps pupils to mix and get fitter. Leaders hope that these activities will help pupils to cope better with school and life.

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

Leaders at all levels have high aspirations for pupils. Most pupils attend regularly. They make good progress and achieve well, particularly in English and science.

The school curriculum offers a broad range of subjects. At key stage 4, most pupils choose subjects that make up the English Baccalaureate. Most study a modern foreign language, either French or Spanish. Modern foreign languages have not been popular with many of the pupils and GCSE results have not been good. Leaders are trying to make these lessons more interesting so that pupils enjoy learning another language.

Subject leaders plan their curriculum so that pupils learn things in a sensible order. For example, the English curriculum is well ordered and the content is thought-provoking. In mathematics, there is clear progression in topic difficulty. This helps pupils to become more confident at solving mathematical problems. In science, there is a project focus in each year group to develop teamwork. In key stage 4 physical education lessons, pupils develop skills in their chosen sport so that they can keep playing the sport when they leave school.

Across the school, teachers want pupils to be well-rounded individuals. The personal, social, health and economic (PHSE) education programme is planned around this ambition. Leaders expect all subjects to support pupils' personal development, but this does not always happen.

Teachers have good subject knowledge. Their high expectations are clear in most lessons. Teachers make effective use of assessment to check pupils' understanding. They adapt lessons successfully when they notice a gap in pupils' learning. They regularly revisit things that need to be remembered. Although pupils behave well, not all lessons capture the imagination of the pupils.

Leaders have formed close links with local primary schools to make sure that pupils continue to make progress. The transition programme is strong. Pupils are helped to settle quickly when they join the school.

Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) follow the full curriculum offered. Their barriers to learning are carefully identified. Teachers use this information well. In lessons, they offer effective support to pupils with SEND.

A small number of key stage 3 and 4 pupils attend alternative education placements. The provision meets their needs well. Staff check on the pupils' achievement and well-being regularly. The school gives these pupils extra support in English and mathematics.

Sixth-form students receive good provision. A growing number of Year 11 pupils choose to stay on in the school's sixth form. In sixth-form lessons, teachers help students to understand the examination requirements. Results at A level are improving. Sixth-form students act as mentors for key stage 3 pupils, but their role in the life of the school is limited.

Teachers appreciate the steps leaders have taken to make their workload manageable. They receive good training from school leaders about how to teach. They say they would now like more subject-specific training to develop their knowledge further.

A newly formed governing body has an accurate understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the school. It is effective in monitoring the work of leaders and helping to plan and deliver improvements. Members are proud of the school's growing reputation in the local community.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

There is a culture of protecting pupils at the school. Leaders and teachers are vigilant in their checks and actions to keep pupils safe. They make sure that pupils know about risks and how to avoid them. The experienced safeguarding team checks on any concerns that are reported to them and act immediately. They work closely with the local authority and other agencies and pupils' families.

Pupils are confident that there are adults they can talk to if they need help. They speak highly of the support provided by the pastoral team.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- The curriculum, outside of PSHE education lessons, does not contribute enough to pupils' personal development. Leaders need to make sure that the curriculum makes a better contribution to pupils' personal development.
- There are not enough opportunities for sixth-form students to develop their confidence. They do not make enough of a contribution to the life of the school. The enrichment programme needs to be more focused on students' personal development. It should provide them with a wider range of different experiences which are outside of their academic studies.
- Despite some effective training about how to teach, some teachers have not had recent subject-specific training. Such training will help to improve further the good quality of education at the school. Leaders should offer greater support for teachers to attend subject development courses and engage with their subject communities.

Background

When we have judged a school to be good, we will then normally go into the school about once every four years to confirm that the school remains good. This is called a section 8 inspection of a good school or non-exempt outstanding school. We do not give graded judgements on a section 8 inspection. However, if we find some evidence that the school could now be better than good or that standards may be declining, then the next inspection will be a section 5 inspection. Usually this is within one to two years of the date of the section 8 inspection. If we have serious concerns about safeguarding, behaviour or the quality of education, we will convert the section 8 inspection to a section 5 inspection immediately.

This is the second section 8 inspection since we judged the predecessor school to be good in 2012.

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 Ofsted Parent View information 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.

If you are not happy with the inspection or the report, you can [complain to Ofsted](#).

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	140049
Local authority	Hertfordshire
Inspection number	10110257
Type of school	Secondary
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	1,079
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	185
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of governing body	Andrew Farrer
Headteacher	Tim Body
Website	www.westfield.herts.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	23 February 2016

Information about this school

- Westfield Academy converted to an academy in September 2013.
- A small number of pupils attend alternative education provision at Chessbrook Education Centre, Watford.
- The number of pupils attending the school has been increasing each year.

Information about this inspection

- We spoke to the headteacher, senior leaders, including the head of the sixth form, the special educational needs coordinator and members of the governing body.
- I spoke to leaders for safeguarding to discuss the actions taken to keep pupils safe. We also checked staff understanding of how to keep pupils safe from harm.

- We visited lessons across a variety of subjects. We looked in detail at English, mathematics, modern foreign languages and science. We spoke with subject leaders, teachers and pupils about their work and about other aspects of life in school.
- I held meetings to discuss attendance and behaviour and spoke to the alternative provision provider.
- There were no responses to Ofsted's online pupil survey. We reviewed 54 responses to Ofsted's staff survey. We met with a group of newly qualified and trainee teachers and a group of support staff members.
- We took into consideration the 46 responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, and the 26 free-text comments.

Inspection team

Kathryn Herlock, lead inspector

Ofsted Inspector

Paul Lawrence

Ofsted Inspector

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