

Ofsted Reports

School report

Weelsby Academy

Weelsby Street, Grimsby, Lincolnshire, DN32 7PF

Inspection dates

20–21 March 2014

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.

☑ Pupils make good progress from exceptionally low starting points.

☑ Outcomes in reading, writing and mathematics have improved. The rate at which pupils acquire basic skills is accelerating, especially in mathematics.

☑ Pupils' behaviour and attitudes to learning are good. Teachers set out their expectations clearly from the very beginning, ensuring that pupils are ready to learn.

☑ Children are prepared well for transferring to more formal lessons in Year 1.

☑ Standards at the end of Key Stage 1 have improved to be broadly average.

☑ Teaching engages and challenges pupils to do their best. Pupils make rapid progress in phonics.

☑ The academy is successfully closing the gap between those pupils for whom the academy receives pupil premium funding and others.

☑ Pupils who have special educational needs or disabilities make good progress.

☑ Behaviour and safety are good. Safeguarding the many vulnerable pupils is a high priority.

☑ Leaders, managers and governors ensure that teaching continues to improve and that pupils' achievement is rising rapidly.

☑ The academy is well led. The headteacher leads energetically, supported by an effective group of middle leaders and the academy sponsor.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

☑ Pupils' reading skills need further development.

☑ Too few pupils write really well.

☑ Attendance is below average.

Inspection report: Weelsby Academy, 20–21 March 2014 2 of 10

Information about this inspection

☑ Inspectors discussed the quality of teaching over time with the headteacher and sampled a good number of lessons. They saw classes in every year of the academy and observed some sessions where pupils were being taught in small groups.

☑ Inspectors interviewed governors and senior leaders about their roles and their accountability.

They spoke also with the academy sponsor and two representatives from the local authority.

☑ Inspectors toured the academy with the headteacher and observed how pupils were being looked after at breaks, lunchtime and the beginning and end of the school day.

☑ Inspectors talked with groups of pupils and heard some pupils read. They scrutinised samples of pupils' work.

☑ Inspectors looked at the academy's records on pupils' progress and read a number of documents where aspects of the academy's work were evaluated or analysed.

☑ Inspectors looked at the checks the academy conducts related to pupils' safety, including on the staff the academy appoints. They looked at records related to pupils' behaviour, to help them gauge behaviour over time. They read a sample of pupils' personal files, to see how the academy helps the pupils it considers the most vulnerable.

☑ As there were hardly any responses to the online questionnaire (Parent View), inspectors looked at the result of questionnaires the academy had conducted. They spoke to some parents at the end of the school day. Inspectors also considered questionnaires completed by six of the staff.

☑ During this inspection, inspectors asked additional questions designed to ascertain the academy's view of the impact and effectiveness of local authority services to support school

improvement. This information will contribute to work being carried out by Ofsted to assess the use, quality and impact of those services.

Inspection team

Honoree Gordon, Lead inspector Her Majesty's Inspector

Susan Twaits Additional Inspector

Peter Bailey Additional Inspector

Inspection report: Weelsby Academy, 20–21 March 2014 3 of 10

Full report

Information about this school

- ☑ This is a larger than average size primary school, with a nursery offering places for up to 39 children. Almost all pupils are White British.
- ☑ The proportion of disabled pupils and those with special educational needs supported through school action is above average. The proportion of pupils supported at school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is high. The overall proportion of children who have special educational needs in any one year group varies from one third to over one half.
- ☑ Over three in five pupils in the academy are supported by pupil premium funding. This figure is well above the national average. The pupil premium is additional government funding for those pupils who are known to be eligible for free school meals, children from service families and those children who are looked after by the local authority.
- ☑ The proportion of pupils who enter or leave the academy in any one year is much higher than usually found and represents over two-fifths of the school roll.
- ☑ The academy considers over half of its pupils to be highly vulnerable. The academy serves a community that has very high levels of social and economic deprivation and unemployment.
- ☑ Two pupils are educated off site at Phoenix Education pupil referral unit.
- ☑ Weelsby Academy converted to an academy on 1 July 2012. This is its first full inspection. When its predecessor school, Weelsby Primary School was last inspected by Ofsted it was judged to be grade 3: 'satisfactory'.
- ☑ The academy's sponsor is the School Partnership Trust. The academy is governed by an education advisory board which reports to the trust.
- ☑ The academy meets the government's current floor standards which are the minimum

expectations for pupils' attainment and progress in English and mathematics.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

☑ Improve attendance further towards the national average, pursuing current strategies and monitoring carefully to ensure they continue to promote improvement.

☑ Develop literacy skills further across the academy and increase the proportion of pupils gaining higher levels in writing by the end of Key Stage 2 by:

further encouraging wider reading to develop pupils' comprehension skills

improving presentation and handwriting in pupils' work so that what they write is enhanced

encouraging more prominent display of pupils' writing around the academy to celebrate their good writing

extending the programme of advice and extra classes offered to the most able pupils to boost their writing skills.

Inspection report: Weelsby Academy, 20–21 March 2014 4 of 10

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils is good

☑ Pupils progress well from very low starting points and reach broadly average standards in reading, writing and mathematics by the time they leave Year 6. Their progress is strongest in mathematics. The reason why achievement is not outstanding is because more pupils could make better than expected progress.

☑ Children get off to a very good start in the Early Years Foundation Stage classes. Teaching is good. Staff have good expertise for this age group. Teachers in the Early Years Foundation Stage provide good role models for the children. Teachers concentrate on children's personal development and social skills from the outset, providing plenty of opportunities to develop speaking skills. This ensures that pupils are well equipped for moving up into Year 1, ready to learn. From their very low starting points, children make rapid progress in phonics, reaching a good standard in the Year 1 phonics tests.

☑ The Early Years Foundation Stage teachers assess the children's progress regularly to be sure that they are building up their basic skills well. They ensure that each day children can practise and reinforce what they have learnt. The teachers and assistants keep up to date with best practice for teaching this age range.

- ☑ Arrangements for setting pupils by ability for reading and mathematics in all year groups are highly effective because teachers are setting work at precisely the right levels for each child. This, and the consistently good teaching they receive, means that pupils make good progress.
- ☑ This additional staffing and grouping is one of the main ways by which the academy uses the pupil premium funding successfully to close the gaps between pupils from more disadvantaged backgrounds and others. Records show that these pupils are doing well and are catching up.
- ☑ Pupils who are supported by the pupil premium achieve well. In the 2013 Year 6 national tests pupils who are known to be eligible for free school meals attained above that of other groups in the academy in mathematics. In reading and in writing their attainment was below that of other groups, less so in reading than in writing. Overtime attainment gaps have been closing and continue to do so, especially for the younger pupils in this group. The academy's actions to close these gaps further are generally successful, including widening the breadth of pupils' reading and providing a booster class in writing.
- ☑ The most able pupils are being challenged well in lessons and so make good progress overall. However, currently, few pupils progress swiftly enough to attain high levels in the Key Stage 2 statutory tests. Teachers are rightly now focusing more on improving the writing skills of the most able pupils, encouraging them to use more sophisticated vocabulary and writing techniques. Disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs also make good progress. Flexible setting arrangements, together with effective use of teaching assistants help to ensure that these pupils are not left behind. Working in small classes, for example, for phonics, is helping to boost reading skills.
- ☑ Pupils whose first language is not English make excellent progress and reach average standards.
- ☑ Girls tend not to do as well as boys, but this gap is beginning to close. The academy is successfully focusing on developing girls' confidence as key to improving their achievement.
- ☑ The alternative provision at Phoenix Education is helping those pupils who have been excluded to prepare for reintegration back into mainstream school.
- ☑ Many pupils' progress in mathematics in Key Stage 2 is rapid. The mathematics curriculum gives pupils a thorough grounding in numeracy, but it is also exciting and challenging, based on real life examples. It is obvious from their eager participation and the learning observed that pupils enjoy the engaging way teachers deliver these lessons.

The quality of teaching is good

- ☑ The academy monitors teaching closely, checks that teachers meet the national standards for
- Inspection report: Weelsby Academy, 20–21 March 2014 5 of 10
- teaching and links teachers' pay to pupils' progress. Inspectors agree with the headteacher that teaching is good over time.
- ☑ Inspectors noted many good features in teaching, both in the lessons observed and in pupils' work analysed. Many of these features were evident in mathematics when older pupils grappled successfully with complex problems, thoroughly enjoying the challenge. Pupils say that they enjoy lessons and coming to school.
- ☑ Teachers manage behaviour very well, so there is a good atmosphere for learning. School and class routines are firmly established, providing good structure to the day and the lessons.
- ☑ Phonics, reading, writing and mathematics are all taught well. By the time they leave Year 6, pupils' reading is broadly average, but their comprehension skills lag behind. This is mainly because they do not read widely. The academy tries hard to encourage this, working with families.
- ☑ Pupils' writing skills are improving. They are now being given good opportunities to write across different subjects. However, pupils' handwriting and presentation of work sometimes detract from the good content.
- ☑ Pupils' progress is tracked carefully. Effective support helps pupils catch up if they find learning difficult, enhance their progress if they are most able, such as in a Year 6 writing booster group. This additional challenge is helping the most able pupils to begin to push for higher levels in the statutory assessment tests at the end of Key Stage 2.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- ☑ The behaviour of pupils is good. There is a good atmosphere for learning throughout the academy. Pupils' attitudes to learning and their behaviour in lessons are good. Teachers develop this positive attitude from the outset, setting out their expectations and ensuring pupils are ready to learn.
- ☑ Setting by ability in all years allows pupils to learn at the pace that is right for them and pupils move groups when teachers judge best. This ensures pupils do not get bored in lessons because the work is not right for them. Teachers are able to set the right pace for each class.

☑ By the time they reach Key Stage 2, pupils are developing confidence and routine for learning so that teachers do not need to stand over them to ensure that they work.

☑ Occasionally, the behaviour of individual pupils falls short of what is typical. Records show that the academy deals with any such behaviour appropriately and promptly. Two pupils are educated at an alternative site. The academy has suitable links to check how they are doing. This alternative provision is helping these pupils prepare for reintegration back to mainstream school. The number of pupils who have had to be excluded has fallen.

☑ Behaviour around the academy in corridors, at playtime and lunchtime is typically good. Teachers encourage pupils to play cooperatively as soon as they start school, to think of others and to learn to share. The academy's promotion of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is a clear strength. This underpins the happy atmosphere, on which parents commented, when speaking with inspectors.

☑ There are not enough examples of good writing by pupils prominently on display around the academy, to encourage writing skills further. This is a missed opportunity to celebrate good achievements

☑ Pupils' handwriting and the presentation of their work sometimes let down the good content.

☑ The academy's work to keep pupils safe and secure is good. The academy conducts the checks it should, including on the background of the staff it appoints. Teachers and other staff supervise pupils closely. They also give advice to pupils about how to keep safe. Older pupils showed a good understanding of the main messages, including about using the internet safely. Pupils know the academy rules, feel they are fair and say that teachers apply them consistently. Pupils say that if there is any bullying it is addressed quickly.

☑ Punctuality is good, but attendance remains a concern. It is too low, although it is improving and is getting nearer to the national average. A small number of pupils persistently do not come to school. This pulls down attendance figures compared to other schools. The academy's leaders make valiant efforts with families to address this, but with mixed results. The appointment of an attendance officer in September 2013 is beginning to make a difference.

The leadership and management are good

☑ Leaders and managers promote achievement well. They create a culture of high expectations

and an academy where teaching and good behaviour flourish. The feedback given by the headteacher and other leaders to teachers provides them with secure advice about how to do even better.

☑ The headteacher leads the academy energetically and decisively. She has built up a strong team of middle managers to support her in the drive to ensure pupils do as well as possible. As a result, the academy is improving rapidly, in challenging circumstances. This demonstrates the academy's strong capacity to improve further.

☑ The academy gets parents on board in supporting their children to learn, even though this is not always easy.

☑ Leaders and governors promote equality of opportunity and tackle discrimination very effectively: the gap between different groups of pupils is closing. The academy's efforts to safeguard and promote the welfare of those pupils it considers to be vulnerable are to be commended. The academy works with their families to successfully break down most of the barriers these pupils face to doing well at school.

☑ The curriculum is good. It rightly focuses on equipping pupils with the basic skills in reading, writing and mathematics that they will need in order to move on successfully to secondary school. Alongside, the academy offers enrichment opportunities that seek to open pupils' eyes to the world around them and raise their aspirations. These include visits out of school, often used to stimulate pupils' writing; and a strong emphasis on taking part in music and the arts.

Inspectors watched an all-girl Year 6 trumpet ensemble and a samba group. Such activities add considerably to pupils' personal development and their enjoyment of school.

☑ The primary sports funding is being used effectively to increase the range of sporting activities and extend the links with other schools and partners in the community. This is increasing pupils' participation in physical activity and is helping to improve their skills. It is beginning to increase pupils' awareness of the importance of taking exercise.

☑ Middle managers have strengthened their skills since the inspection of the predecessor school. They have taken on board their responsibility and accountability for pupils' progress. These 'lead learners' actively and effectively support the headteacher's drive for improvement.

☑ The local authority rightly judges this academy to be 'self-sustaining'. This means that they do not have to intervene actively to support the academy, because its leaders know what they are

doing and take effective action to improve. Despite now being an academy and independent of the authority, the academy continues to draw well on their advice, alongside that of its sponsor.

This is a healthy sign of the headteacher's determination to improve pupils' achievement further.

☑ The impact and effectiveness of the local authority's services to support school improvement is good. The authority knows the academy's needs well. It supports the academy appropriately in a 'light-touch' way. This reinforces the challenge provided by the sponsor, without overstepping limits or duplicating.

☑ These good relationships between the academy and the local authority are helping the academy in its drive to improve standards further. The main impact is in sharpening the academy's use of data. For example, advice from the local authority has helped the academy to use data more effectively in the Early Years Foundation Stage classes to check the accuracy of teachers' assessments.

☑ The headteacher has kept alive her links with other local schools in the authority cluster group. The academy benefits from this dialogue and, in turn, shares its good practice with other schools.

☑ The governance of the school:

Inspection report: Weelsby Academy, 20–21 March 2014 7 of 10

The academy chain has ensured that governors are well equipped to hold academy leaders to account for the academy's performance.

Governors are conscientious in fulfilling their duties and responsibilities. A number of members of the education trust have useful experience and background in education. This helps them to support and challenge the academy well.

The governors work productively with the sponsor and the local educational authority to support the academy in its drive to improve standards.

Governors monitor and evaluate the work of the academy effectively. The performance of the headteacher is based on challenging targets. Governors are well informed about the quality of teaching and the arrangements for teachers' performance management. They link teachers' progression to that of their pupils.

As a result, pupils' achievement is improving rapidly. In this, full credit must be given to the part played by the headteacher, her drive and determination in securing this improvement.

Inspection report: Weelsby Academy, 20–21 March 2014 8 of 10

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 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.

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.

Inspection report: Weelsby Academy, 20–21 March 2014 9 of 10

School details

Unique reference number 138279

Local authority North East Lincolnshire

Inspection number 408827

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

Type of school Primary

School category Academy sponsor-led

Age range of pupils 3–11

Gender of pupils Mixed

Number of pupils on the school roll 326

Appropriate authority The governing body

Chair Mr M Rushby

Headteacher Mrs H Hawkes

Date of previous school inspection Not previously inspected

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