

Weelsby Academy

Weelsby Street, Grimsby, Lincolnshire DN32 7PF

Inspection dates

13–14 September 2018

Overall effectiveness	Requires improvement
Effectiveness of leadership and management	Requires improvement
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Requires improvement
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Requires improvement
Outcomes for pupils	Requires improvement
Early years provision	Requires improvement
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Good

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a school that requires improvement

- The head of academy and associate executive principal are new to their roles. They have not had the time to fully evaluate the quality of provision in the school or further improve outcomes for pupils.
- Over time, leaders have not ensured that pupils across all year groups and in a wide range of subjects, especially writing, make consistently strong progress.
- The quality of teaching, learning and assessment is variable across the school. The most able pupils and pupils who have special educational needs (SEN) and/or disabilities sometimes make less progress than their peers because teaching is not sufficiently matched to their needs.
- While there are new plans to improve the standard of phonics teaching, currently it is inconsistent. Over time, including for pupils currently in the school, leaders have not enabled all pupils to read as well as they should.
- The standard of pupils' behaviour in the school is variable. Lessons are sometimes interrupted by low-level disruption. On occasions, a small number of pupils do not show appropriate conduct towards classmates or visitors. This is because leaders have not fully established the right climate for learning.
- Although leaders have acted to improve the quality of the early years provision, the effect of this work is currently limited by a lack of clarity about who is responsible for leading it.

The school has the following strengths

- The new leaders have brought some stability to the school following a period of turbulence. Supported by governors, they have a resolute determination to further improve the school.
- As a result of some recent intensive strategies, outcomes in 2018 at both key stages 1 and 2 showed a marked improvement on recent years, particularly in reading and mathematics.
- Most pupils behave well around school and in lessons. They are polite to one another, their teachers and visitors.
- Following the relaunch of the school's behaviour policy, the use of exclusion of pupils from the school has reduced significantly.
- Rates of attendance have improved and are now close to the national average. Although still above the national average, persistent absence has reduced considerably.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Secure consistency in the quality of teaching, so that pupils make at least good progress over time, by ensuring that:
 - lessons challenge pupils so that they are engaged in their learning and instances of low-level disruption are eliminated
 - work is carefully matched to the ability of pupils, including the most able and those who have SEN and/or disabilities, so that more pupils can achieve higher standards.
- Improve the effectiveness of leadership by ensuring that:
 - there is clarity about strategies for the improvement in the early years, and who is responsible for them, so that the effect of the strategies is not delayed
 - standards of behaviour continue to improve and are consistently strong across the school by establishing a consistently strong climate for learning.
- Improve the teaching of phonics and early reading by:
 - dedicating sufficient leadership time to the improvements that need to be made in reading
 - making sure that all staff receive training so that they understand the principles of systematic synthetic phonics
 - matching the books pupils receive to practise their reading to the precise sounds they know or are learning
 - making sure that the link between reading and spelling is explicitly taught.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Requires improvement

- The newly in-post head of academy and associate executive principal have already started to improve the culture of expectations in the school. Together, they have a clear vision that every child is entitled to achieve as well as they possibly can. Leaders have identified the priorities facing the school and have drawn up plans to enable them to bring about continued and rapid improvement. It is too early to fully evaluate the effect of these plans. However, despite the appropriateness of the current plans, over time, leaders have not done enough to ensure that pupils make consistently strong progress across year groups and subjects.
- Although recent action has been taken to improve the quality of the leadership and the teaching of reading, over time, leaders have not done enough to ensure that all pupils can read as well as they should. Leaders have allowed inconsistent and ineffective practice around the teaching of reading to develop. As a consequence, there is variability across key stage 1 and lower key stage 2 in how well pupils are taught to read. As a result of the weaknesses in reading, pupils' writing skills have not progressed as well as they should.
- Leaders took effective action during the previous academic year to address the poor outcomes of previous years. Outcomes at the end of key stage 1 and key stage 2 improved significantly. While this was essential, leaders have more to do to ensure that pupils embed the knowledge and skills required in the years which precede the national tests. This is crucial if the need for intensive 'quick fixes' is to be prevented from developing into a long-term necessity.
- There is a strong commitment from leaders to the use of continuing professional development to further improve the quality of teaching and pupils' outcomes. Staff speak positively about the improvements that have taken place in the school over the last year. They value the training they receive, including the support for newly qualified teachers. Teaching assistants feel more equipped to better support pupils as a result of effective training.
- Leaders have focused recently on preparing pupils for life in modern Britain. As a result, the school is an increasingly tolerant and positive environment. Pupils told inspectors that there has been a strong emphasis in the last year on having 'a pride in yourself and respect for others'. They also said that all pupils were now included, and not left out, if they are different in some way to the majority.
- Leaders have made effective use of additional funding for the pupil premium and physical education and sport premium. This is particularly evident in the improved outcomes and attendance for disadvantaged pupils. Leaders' use of this funding has also led to an increase in the number of pupils participating in extra-curricular sporting activities.
- Pupils have access to a range of wider curriculum activities, including sporting opportunities such as archery, orienteering and dodgeball, learning about democracy through the school council, and charity events. Leaders have commenced a curriculum

review into how the school could further support pupils' personal, social and cultural development.

Governance of the school

- Governors have an accurate understanding of the school's strengths and areas for development. They recognise that the school is 'still on a journey' and that they still have 'a way to go'. For example, they understand that there are pockets of teaching which are not yet good enough and have sanctioned plans to address this.
- As well as the plans for improving teaching, governors have overseen a process whereby a significant number of additional leaders have worked in the school to improve pupils' outcomes. This followed a period of several years where pupils' progress was well below the national average. As a result of recent actions, there was a significant improvement in outcomes during the previous academic year.
- It is clear from the minutes of governors' meetings that they now have a tight grip on the work leaders are doing and the effect of this work. As a matter of routine, they ask challenging questions of leaders and hold them to account for the progress pupils are making.
- Following a period during which standards of behaviour were not good and the use of exclusion was rising, governors have supported leaders in the implementation of the relaunched behaviour policy. This has led to an improvement in the conduct of most pupils.
- Governors are very clear about their responsibilities in helping to raise pupils' aspirations. They have a sound understanding of leaders' plans to develop the school curriculum, especially through science, technology, engineering and mathematics initiatives. There is a commitment to seeing this through.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective. The governing body fulfils its responsibilities regarding matters relating to safeguarding children. There is a strong safeguarding culture in the school.
- Leaders make sure that the appropriate checks are carried out on the adults who work in and visit the school.
- Those responsible for taking the lead with regard to child protection have received the necessary training. They work closely and in a timely fashion with external agencies to keep children safe.
- Staff have received appropriate training and recent updates in matters related to safeguarding. They are aware of the safeguarding factors to be particularly vigilant for in the school's setting. Staff are aware of the school's whistle-blowing policy, and know what to do should they be concerned about the conduct of any adult in the school.
- Pupils who made their views known say that they feel safe at school. They told inspectors that bullying is not a problem in school but that, should it happen, it would get sorted out.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Requires improvement

- While it is improving, the quality of teaching is variable across the school. This lack of consistency is evident in both key stage 1 and key stage 2.
- The quality of phonics teaching is variable. Although there is some effective phonics teaching, leaders have not done enough to make sure that teachers have a clear and full understanding of the principles of teaching systematic phonics. As a result, some pupils make poor progress in their reading. There is an insufficient grasp among leaders and teachers of how to match pupils' reading books to their level of phonics ability. This means that some pupils cannot read the books their teachers have given them to read and their progress stalls.
- The weaknesses in phonics teaching are also having a negative effect on the progress pupils make in their writing. On occasions, pupils cannot read the words their teacher has written on the board to help them in their writing. Pupils' progress in acquiring writing skills is limited because, sometimes, they do not see the link between reading and spelling.
- At times, work set for pupils, including for the most able and pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities, is not challenging and does not match leaders' high aspirations. Pupils told inspectors that the work sometimes does not stretch them. For example, in key stage 2, writing tasks require pupils to concentrate on basic features such as capital letters, full stops and finger spaces. At other times, tasks repeat work from previous years, with pupils unable to say what they are learning from the activity. In key stage 1 mathematics, work is of a very undemanding nature.
- Teaching does not consistently engage pupils because teachers do not take pupils' starting points sufficiently into account. As a result, pupils sometimes become bored and inattentive, with some low-level disruption taking place.
- Despite leaders' ambitions for the school, teachers' subject knowledge sometimes falls short of what is required. For instance, during the inspection, subject-specific words were misspelled on the board in classrooms, names of mathematical shapes were confused and pupils' use of non-standard English when answering questions was not always addressed. Although in the minority, these instances reflect the variable quality of teaching.
- When pupils' learning is at its best in the school, they are set tasks which match their needs and abilities and they engage well with them. This is in both key stages and across subjects. In key stage 2 mathematics, for example, pupils are challenged to improve their understanding of multiplication, with pupils able to demonstrate where and how they had used new understanding to properly grasp the principle.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Requires improvement

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good.
- The school's records of bullying show that the number of incidents has reduced. Leaders have developed an anti-bullying culture through links with external

organisations such as the National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children and the police, through the introduction of restorative practice and through increasing the involvement of parents and carers when incidents occur.

- Pupils spoke positively about the school's tolerant culture and how this was continuing to improve. They spoke warmly about how the school encouraged them to believe in themselves and to have respect for others.
- Pupils' welfare is supported through the education they receive in a variety of areas, such as internet safety, fire safety, personal safety, bicycle riding and swimming.
- The school uses two alternative educational providers. Leaders have not implemented an effective means of monitoring and evaluating the effect of the alternative provision curriculum on pupils' attendance, behaviour, development and progress.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils requires improvement.
- Although staff and pupils agree that behaviour is improving, there is still work to do. A small number of lessons are affected by low-level disruption, with pupils talking over the teacher, getting out of their seats, not listening to their classmates' answers and even laughing at the attempted answers of their peers. Pupils and staff told inspectors that there were still fights, swearing and name-calling during social times. Two of the meetings between pupils and inspectors were characterised by inattentive, inappropriate and immature behaviour.
- Most of the time, pupils conduct themselves well. For example, they are calm and orderly when moving around the school building. They are usually polite towards one another and to visitors, for example holding doors open. During the inspection, pupils played appropriately during playtimes and at lunchtimes. Generally, pupils' behaviour is similarly calm and courteous.
- Leaders have taken action over the last year to address worryingly high levels of absence and persistent absence. As a consequence, although the absence rate remains slightly above the national average, it has improved substantially compared with the previous year. The number of pupils who are persistently absent remains above the national average but this figure has reduced by a considerable margin. The attendance of disadvantaged pupils and those who have SEN and/or disabilities is now above the national average.
- The use of exclusion as a behaviour management strategy has also reduced. The school's records indicate that, following a relaunch of the behaviour policy and staff training, the number of pupils being excluded has fallen substantially. The proportion of disadvantaged pupils and those who have SEN and/or disabilities who are excluded has also reduced significantly.

Outcomes for pupils

Requires improvement

- At the end of key stage 2 in 2018, pupils' outcomes in reading, writing and mathematics improved markedly compared to those in previous years, where attainment and progress were below the national averages. Provisional data for the

tests at the end of key stage 2 in 2018 indicates that, in reading and mathematics, pupils' progress was above the national average.

- However, provisional data for tests at the end of key stage 2 in 2018 indicates that, in writing, although there has been an improvement in both attainment and progress, it is not as pronounced as that in reading and mathematics. The proportion of pupils achieving a greater depth of understanding in writing has remained stubbornly well below the national average and has remained static over three years.
- The school's assessment information shows that, in the tests at the end of key stage 2 in 2018, the most able pupils achieved significantly less well than other pupils in both reading and writing. The school's assessment information also shows that pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities achieved significantly less well than their peers, particularly in writing.
- The key stage 1 national tests in 2018 show similar improvements to those witnessed at key stage 2. However, despite being a significantly more-able cohort on entry to the school, pupils achieved only a small improvement in writing attainment compared to the attainment of the significantly weaker cohort in 2017.
- Outcomes in the phonics screening check at the end of Year 1 have been well below the national average for the expected standard for the last three years, with only a small improvement in 2018. This is despite the fact that, at the end of Reception the previous year, the same cohort's attainment was far closer to the national average in 2017 than it was for the proportion passing the phonics screening check in 2018.
- Many pupils in key stage 1 make good progress in reading. However, a significant minority of pupils cannot read as well as they should, which limits their ability to access the wider curriculum and complete the work which is set for them.
- Pupils across the year groups in the school make variable progress in reading and writing. In Year 1, for example, there is evidence that many pupils make good progress with their reading and that this is helping them to become confident writers. Elsewhere in Year 1, however, pupils' progress is weak because they cannot read the words they are required to use in their writing. Progress in Year 2 writing is not good for some pupils because they having to catch up as they did not acquire the necessary skills during the early years and Year 1.
- Pupils in key stage 2 often make good progress in writing due to the practice and consolidation of skills. However, this progress is inconsistent across the year groups because the same errors sometimes persist without successful correction and because the work does not always sufficiently challenge pupils to achieve at a higher standard.

Early years provision

Requires improvement

- Leaders have identified the early years foundation stage as a priority for the school and have taken action to improve and support the leadership and teaching in this area through additional staffing.
- Although leaders have a plan in place for further improvement to the early years, there is currently a lack of clarity about which member of staff is actually responsible for implementing the plans. This needs to be resolved as a matter of urgency.

- In both Nursery and Reception, leaders and teachers have a number of routines which are already well established and which enable the children to get on with their tasks. For much of the time, children are attentive and, at the teachers' requests, become quiet. The children are polite and courteous, with teachers reinforcing these expectations through regular praise.
- However, the children do not always know when to sit quietly and pay attention to the teacher. This is because snack time is combined with a listening and reading activity, so that pupils are distracted by what they are eating and drinking and how to dispose of the waste. As a result, their focus on the activity is limited.
- Phonics teaching in the early years enables children to begin to learn the sounds of letters. When the children are ready, more challenging sounds are introduced so that children from different starting points can make appropriate progress.
- The teaching of writing is closely linked by teachers to the children's grasp of recognising letters for sounds. However, a number of children do not have the correct pencil grip to enable them to write as neatly and legibly as they could. In addition, most children cannot write their name and struggle to form letters correctly.
- For much of the time, the children are actively engaged in a variety of activities. On occasions, however, there are not enough resources to go around and children sit waiting with nothing to do.
- There is appropriate provision for the development of other areas of the children's learning in addition to language and communication. Their social and emotional development is nurtured through their play and the way in which they are taught to work alongside and with their peers. They are also supported in learning how to become resilient learners, for example through persistence in the completion of a mathematics activity.
- The school's assessment of the children's ability and progress is accurate. Although the proportion of children attaining a good level of development is below the national average and has been for several years, considering their starting points, overall, the children make progress.
- Safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose.

School details

Unique reference number	138279
Local authority	North East Lincolnshire
Inspection number	10047552

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 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	361
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair	Mr Mark Rushby
Headteacher	Mr James Phillips
Telephone number	01472 342 554
Website	www.weelsby.org.uk/
Email address	info@weelsby.org.uk
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Information about this school

- Weelsby Academy is part of Delta Academies Trust. It converted to academy status on 1 July 2012. The trust's board of directors delegates day-to-day responsibility to the chief executive officer. Governance responsibility sits with academy advisory bodies for each school. At present, Weelsby Academy operates under the governance of an interim advisory body following its joining of the trust.
- Weelsby Academy is larger than the average-sized primary school.
- The proportion of pupils who are eligible for free school meals is higher than the national average.
- The school serves a community with a higher level of deprivation than the national average.
- The proportion of pupils who have an education, health and care plan is below the national average. The proportion of pupils eligible for support for their SEN and/or disabilities is in line with the national average.

- The school has links with two providers of alternative education: Phoenix Park Primary School and Western Primary School.
- The school is in receipt of support from the trust. In the current academic year, additional support for leadership and teaching is in place. This consists of five directors of learning, an early years foundation stage leader and an associate executive principal.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed lessons across a range of key stage year groups and subjects, sometimes accompanied by school leaders or trust leaders. Inspectors scrutinised pupils' work, both in lessons and as part of two work samples.
- Meetings were held with the delegate of the trust's chief executive officer, the head of academy and associate executive principal, leaders providing support from the trust, other school leaders, teachers at different career points, non-teachers and members of the interim advisory board.
- Inspectors spoke with pupils in formal meetings and informally in lessons and around the school.
- An inspector listened to pupils read.
- An inspector spoke with parents in the playground at the start of the school day.
- Pupils were observed during playtimes and lunchtimes, in an assembly and when moving around the school.
- An inspector made contact with the two schools used as alternative education providers.
- A range of school documentation was scrutinised, including school improvement plans, the school's self-evaluation, behaviour and attendance records, minutes of meetings with governors, pupils' progress information and documents relating to child protection and safeguarding.
- There were insufficient responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, for these to be considered but the three free-text responses were taken into account. The views of the 17 staff who responded to the staff survey were considered, as were the 22 pupil survey responses.

Inspection team

Steve Shaw, lead inspector	Her Majesty's Inspector
Larissa Thorpe	Ofsted Inspector
Angela Harper	Ofsted Inspector

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