

# Inspection of a good school: Wandle Valley Academy

Welbeck Road, Carshalton, Surrey SM5 1LW

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Inspection dates:

15 and 16 November 2023

## Outcome

Wandle Valley Academy continues to be a good school.

The headteacher of this school is Lynda Harris. This school is part of the Parallel Learning Trust, which means other people in the trust also have responsibility for running the school. The trust is run by the interim chief executive officer, Angela Barry, and overseen by a board of trustees, chaired by Jonathan Alvis.

## What is it like to attend this school?

Many pupils have missed significant time in education before arriving at this school. Staff help them make up for lost time. Pupils enjoy being in small classes. The school assesses their academic and social, emotional and mental health (SEMH) needs early on. Because of the curriculum and the therapeutic support provided, pupils settle well over time. Pupils develop trusting working relationships with staff. They view staff as helpful role models who understand them and their behavioural needs. Staff have high expectations of pupils' work and behaviour. They act quickly and calmly when behaviour incidents occur.

Pupils understand what bullying is. Pupils know to report any incidents of bullying should they occur. They have confidence that staff will resolve any issues.

Leaders make sure that pupils have a broad enrichment offer. Wednesday afternoon activities are especially popular. Pupils can choose from art, cookery, coding, tennis and a range of sports. Friday 'golden time' is a reward for good work and behaviour. Pupils are proud to receive rewards in weekly celebration assemblies. Staff recognise pupils' good work and their improved attendance and behaviour. Pupils appreciate the weekly positive contact the school has with parents and carers.

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

The school provides a broad and ambitious curriculum. Pupils study a range of subjects while catching up on missed learning. Secondary pupils leave school with qualifications that help them to access the next stage of their education. The academy council and trust have worked together to increase accountability at the school. They ensure a balance of challenge and support in their work with leaders and staff. Staff work as a team. They are

committed to helping every pupil at the school overcome their challenges so that they can thrive.

Staff plan the curriculum with pupils' individual needs in mind. For example, some older pupils access off-site vocational learning in construction. Typically, the curriculum is logically sequenced. Pupils' knowledge builds on what they have learned before. In mathematics, for instance, pupils start learning about fractions in Year 3. By Year 7, pupils can convert improper fractions with confidence. Teachers check and clarify for any misconceptions in pupils' understanding well.

Typically, subject leaders have identified the important knowledge that pupils need to learn. In a small number of subjects, curricular thinking does not precisely pinpoint the building blocks of knowledge that pupils need. Teaching focuses on the activities pupils should complete rather than the key knowledge they should develop. In these cases, pupils do not deepen their knowledge of important content.

Reading has a high priority at the school. Leaders assess pupils' reading as soon as they arrive. Staff use phonics effectively to teach pupils to read. Books are well matched to the sounds that pupils learn. The school provides one-to-one help with reading where needed. This enables pupils to develop confidence in reading whole texts. There is a developing culture of reading across the school. Pupils read fiction and non-fiction texts and learn new vocabulary in all subjects. Secondary pupils appreciate regular reading time with their form tutors.

Staff make adaptations to meet the academic and behavioural needs of each pupil. They meet regularly to share the strategies that are working well. Staff track pupils' progress against their individual targets. They teach pupils helpful strategies to manage their behaviour and emotions. Many pupils join the school with a history of poor attendance. Leaders analyse the attendance patterns of each pupil closely. They are supportive in their work with pupils and families to address the causes of absence.

The well-planned personal, social and health education curriculum prepares pupils for life outside of school. Pupils understand the importance of personal boundaries and how to stay safe. They learn to respect themselves and others. During 'diversity week', they celebrate different cultural traditions. Pupils visit places of interest, such as the cinema, theatres and museums. An effective careers programme prepares pupils for their next steps. They have quality interactions with employers and further education providers.

## **Safeguarding**

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

## **What does the school need to do to improve?**

### **(Information for the school and appropriate authority)**

- In a small number of subjects, the school does not precisely identify the small steps of learning that pupils need to know. This means that, on occasion, learning focuses on

activities that pupils need to complete rather than important content. The school should make sure that key knowledge is clearly identified and sequenced so that teaching can build on pupils' key knowledge and understanding closely.

## 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 an ungraded inspection, and it is carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. We do not give graded judgements on an ungraded inspection. However, if we find evidence that a school would now receive a higher or lower grade, then the next inspection will be a graded inspection, which is carried out under section 5 of the Act. Usually this is within one to two years of the date of the ungraded inspection. If we have serious concerns about safeguarding, behaviour or the quality of education, we will deem the ungraded inspection a graded inspection immediately.

This is the second ungraded inspection since we judged the school to be good in January 2014.

## 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](#)' is used to mean pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND); pupils who meet the [definition of children in need of help and protection](#); pupils receiving statutory local authority support from a social worker; and pupils who otherwise meet the criteria used for deciding the school's [pupil premium funding](#) (this includes pupils claiming free school meals at any point in the last six years, looked after children (children in local authority care) and/or children who left care through adoption or another formal route).

## School details

<b>Unique reference number</b>	137507
<b>Local authority</b>	Sutton
<b>Inspection number</b>	10290182
<b>Type of school</b>	Special
<b>School category</b>	Academy special sponsor-led
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	5 to 16
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	88
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	Board of trustees
<b>Chair of trust</b>	Jonathan Alvis
<b>Headteacher</b>	Lynda Harris
<b>Website</b>	<a href="http://www.wandlevalleyacademy.org.uk">www.wandlevalleyacademy.org.uk</a>
<b>Date of previous inspection</b>	13 March 2018, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005.

## Information about this school

- The school joined the Parallel Learning Trust in November 2018.
- All pupils have an education, health and care plan for SEMH needs.
- The school does not use alternative provision.
- The school meets the requirements of the provider access legislation, which requires schools to provide pupils in Years 8 to 13 with information and engagement about approved technical education qualifications and apprenticeships.

## Information about this inspection

- Inspections are a point-in-time judgement about the quality of a school's education provision.
- This was the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. Inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with the school and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.

- Inspectors met with leaders and staff in the school, including those responsible for the quality of education, behaviour, attendance, pupils' wider development and safeguarding.
- Inspectors met with a representative from the trust and members of the academy council. These included the chair and vice chair.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in early reading, English, mathematics and music. For each deep dive, inspectors held discussions about the curriculum, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers, spoke to some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work.
- Inspectors also considered the curriculum in some other subjects.
- To evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding, inspectors: reviewed the single central record; took account of the views of leaders, staff and pupils; and considered the extent to which the school has created an open and inclusive culture around safeguarding that puts pupils' interests first.

### **Inspection team**

Lisa Strong, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

Bob Hamlyn

His Majesty's Inspector

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