

# Inspection of Whitelands Academy

Hexham Road, Bicester, Oxfordshire OX26 1AY

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Inspection dates: 10 and 11 January 2023

<b>Overall effectiveness</b>	<b>Good</b>
The quality of education	<b>Good</b>
Behaviour and attitudes	<b>Good</b>
Personal development	<b>Outstanding</b>
Leadership and management	<b>Good</b>
Previous inspection grade	Not previously inspected under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

## **What is it like to attend this school?**

In a short space of time, leaders and trustees have successfully created a distinctive and vibrant school. Pupils are being well prepared to succeed academically and to become responsible citizens. High expectations of all pupils and a clear set of values, known as 'our traits', are the foundations of the school. Pupils understand and live up to these values. They enjoy their learning and are appreciative of the help they receive from staff, who know them well.

The school is calm and orderly. Pupils feel safe in school, and there is a culture of respect. Staff have very high expectations of behaviour. The 'roll call' system provides an opportunity for staff to reinforce expectations throughout the day.

Relationships between staff and pupils are warm. They interact well at break and lunchtimes. Pupils appreciate the work that teachers do to recognise their individual successes and to support them when needed. Achievements are celebrated through the house system and the use of the 'behaviour mastery cards'. Bullying is rare, and derogatory language is not accepted. Any incidents are responded to swiftly and effectively.

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

The provision for pupils' personal development is outstanding. The personal, social, health and economic education programme (PSHE) is very well planned and delivered. Pupils are educated well about important issues through lessons, tutor time activities and assemblies. Many subjects help to develop pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural understanding throughout the curriculum. Pupils say that they are taught 'what's right and what's wrong'. They demonstrate a very confident understanding of issues like healthy relationships, including consent. Pupils, including those who are disadvantaged and those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), regularly take part in the broad range of clubs on offer. The careers programme is a particular strength. Pupils receive guidance through cross-curricular opportunities, assemblies, visiting speakers and career days.

Leaders have designed an ambitious and challenging key stage 3 curriculum. They have thought carefully about what pupils need to learn and when. Languages is a particular strength, with all pupils studying both French and Spanish. Pupils are being well prepared to continue studying languages in key stage 4. Where necessary, staff from within the trust have provided specialist subject expertise to develop the curriculum.

Promoting pupils' confidence and enjoyment in reading is at the heart of the curriculum. Pupils enjoy reading with their teachers during daily guided reading lessons. These sessions help pupils to appreciate an ambitious and diverse range of

literature. Leaders carefully identify pupils who are struggling with reading. Specialist teaching for the weakest readers ensures that these pupils catch up quickly.

The curriculum is generally delivered effectively, and pupils learn well. Pupils' positive attitudes to learning and the consistent use of the behaviour policy lead to a purposeful atmosphere in lessons. Staff have been well trained to use teaching methods that challenge and support all pupils, including those with SEND. Clear routines are in place to help pupils recall and deepen their knowledge. Pupils say that regularly carrying out 'DNA' tasks supports their learning and 'helps things to stick in our brain'. However, occasionally, teachers do not check carefully enough that all pupils have understood key points. As a result, teachers do not always address pupils' errors and misconceptions before moving on.

Trustees and governors are highly ambitious for the school. They are determined to maintain the school's standards and values as it grows in size. The Trust provides valuable expertise and support, including for leadership, curriculum development and staff training. Staff feel well supported by leaders. They recognise the heavy workload involved in setting up a new school, but they feel well supported by leaders. The school is heavily over-subscribed, and most parents are appreciative of the school. However, a minority express concerns, particularly about communication and support for pupils with SEND.

## **Safeguarding**

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

The new principal prioritised strengthening staff knowledge and safeguarding procedures in the school. All staff, including lunchtime supervisors, receive regular training and guidance. They are highly vigilant and report anything that does not feel right.

The safeguarding team is experienced and knowledgeable of risks in the local area. The team keeps a watchful eye on all pupils and acts quickly if there are any concerns. Leaders ensure that all systems and records are meticulously organised so that nothing is missed. Leaders work relentlessly to ensure that pupils and their families get the support they need from other agencies.

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

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

- At times, the use of assessment for learning does not help pupils to embed knowledge and use it fluently. Teachers do not routinely promote appropriate discussion about learning to check that pupils' understanding is secure before

moving on to new learning. Leaders should ensure that assessment is used consistently to support pupils to deepen their understanding over time.

- A minority of parents, particularly those with children with SEND, do not feel that the school responds to concerns or queries in a timely and effective manner. Leaders should ensure they develop strong channels of communication with parents to allow them to work together effectively.

## 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](#)' 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

<b>Unique reference number</b>	147872
<b>Local authority</b>	Oxfordshire
<b>Inspection number</b>	10256253
<b>Type of school</b>	Secondary Comprehensive
<b>School category</b>	Academy free school
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	11 to 16
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	362
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	Board of trustees
<b>CEO of trust</b>	Paul Smith
<b>Principal</b>	Emma Bryson
<b>Website</b>	<a href="http://www.whitelandsacademy.org">www.whitelandsacademy.org</a>
<b>Date of previous inspection</b>	9 to 15 June 2020, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

## Information about this school

- The school is part of the White Horse Federation Trust.
- The school opened in September 2020. It currently has pupils in Years 7 to 9. It will have pupils in all year groups up to Year 11 by September 2024.
- The school has had two principals since it opened. The current principal took up post in September 2022.
- The school has a special resourced provision for pupils with social, emotional and mental health needs and communication and interaction needs. Currently, three pupils use this provision.
- The school currently uses one registered 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 about approved technical education qualifications and apprenticeships

## Information about this inspection

The inspectors carried out this graded inspection under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

- This was the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. Inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with leaders and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- Inspectors held meetings with a range of leaders, including the principal and senior leaders. They also met with subject leaders, pastoral leaders, teaching and support staff.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: English, mathematics, modern foreign languages and science. For each deep dive, inspectors discussed curriculum design with subject leaders, carried out lesson visits, scrutinised pupils' work, spoke to teachers and spoke to pupils from the lessons visited about their learning. In addition, the inspectors visited lessons and spoke to pupils about their learning in some other subjects.
- Inspectors met with the special educational needs coordinator and visited the additional support hub.
- Inspectors evaluated the effectiveness of safeguarding. They reviewed the school's single central record and met with the designated safeguarding lead to discuss case studies of safeguarding referrals.
- The lead inspector met with the CEO of the trust and representatives from the local governing body.
- Inspectors considered the views of members of staff who responded to Ofsted's online staff survey. The views of parents were considered from responses to the Ofsted Parent View survey and parents' free-text responses. Inspectors met with groups of pupils, formally and informally, to discuss their views of the school and considered their responses to the Ofsted survey.

## Inspection team

Mark Bagust, lead inspector	Ofsted Inspector
Lucy Hillyard	Ofsted Inspector

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