

Inspection of an outstanding school: St Weonard's Academy

Mount Way, St Weonards, Hereford, Herefordshire HR2 8NU

Inspection dates: 4 June 2024

Outcome

There has been no change to this school's overall judgement of outstanding as a result of this ungraded (section 8) inspection. However, the evidence gathered suggests that the inspection grade might not be as high if a graded (section 5) inspection were carried out now. The school's next inspection will be a graded inspection.

The head of school is Angela Clarke. This school is part of Hereford Marches Federation of Academies, which means other people in the trust also have responsibility for running the school. The trust is run by the chief executive officer, Alison Taylor, and overseen by a board of trustees, chaired by Matt Ashcroft. There is also an executive headteacher, Alison Taylor, who is responsible for this school and three others.

What is it like to attend this school?

St Weonard's Academy is a welcoming and inclusive school. The school wants all pupils to succeed and overcome any barriers to education. However, some aspects of the school's work are not checked well enough, including curriculum and attendance, to ensure that pupils get the best possible deal.

The school's flexi-schooling arrangement means that some pupils combine learning at home and at school. Many families travel from outside of the area to be part of the St Weonard's 'growing together, learning together' approach.

Pupils, families and staff know each other well. A kind, caring ethos is at the root of everything the school does. This makes pupils feel safe and enables them to enjoy attending. This includes pupils who have previously found attending school difficult. Pupils say that, if they have a worry, they can talk to any adult in school and receive the right support. They say that staff listen to them.

Pupils are friendly and polite. They learn and play happily together in mixed-age classes. Joining together with other schools in the trust means that pupils benefit from experiences such as residential trips and sporting events. Pupils enjoy the clubs on offer and visits such as to the local theatre.

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

The curriculum is designed to take account of the mixed-age classes. The school has identified what it wants pupils to learn. This is organised into small, logical steps that enable pupils to build on their understanding over time. For example, in history, pupils confidently discuss chronology and how different periods in the past relate to each other. Teachers effectively check on what pupils know and have learned.

In mathematics, the curriculum is organised so that pupils who are flexi-schooled do not miss out on core teaching. This includes in the early years, where children are keen to demonstrate their understanding of mathematical concepts. For example, children in nursery delight in practising counting frogs on lily pads during water-based play. Pupils in the mainstream autism base enjoy making and counting flowers for a familiar book character. Useful information is provided to parents to help teach mathematics at home. Staff know the pupils well and highly personalised support helps pupils, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) to access the same learning.

However, there is a lack of oversight of the curriculum. Subject leaders do not check how their intended curriculum is being implemented in classrooms. They do not know how their subjects are taught in the mainstream autism base. This means that the school does not know if the curriculum is being delivered as intended.

This lack of oversight extends to phonics. The school has implemented a phonics scheme and children in early years get off to a swift start in learning the sounds they need to know. However, not all staff are not trained well enough to be able to deliver the phonics programme effectively and sounds are not always taught in a logical order. Pupils enjoy learning to read, but they do not always practise reading with books which are well matched to the sounds they know. This slows their learning. In addition, some older pupils are not encouraged to read a wide range of books and pupils say that they would like more contemporary books to read.

Many of the pupils have SEND. The school quickly and accurately identifies the needs of pupils, academically and pastorally. Many of the pupils who attend the mainstream autism base have previously experienced disrupted schooling. They have settled quickly into this new provision. While these pupils do not yet enjoy the full range of experiences the school offers for other pupils, they benefit from some opportunities to play with pupils in the mainstream classes.

Many pupils who previously did not benefit from any formal education now attend regularly. However, leaders do not use the information they have about attendance to ensure that they can identify what is working well or what further work could be done to increase attendance even further.

Pupils demonstrate tolerance and understanding. They behave well in school and understand the systems in place to help them make the right behaviour choices. Pupils celebrate each other's successes. Visits, for example to the cathedral, help them to understand about beliefs and their local community. While there is a school council, this does not meet regularly so pupils do not benefit from taking on this leadership role.

At times, leaders, including at trust level, do not know what is working well. This has impacted on some necessary improvements. However, staff morale is high and there is a shared determination for every pupil to succeed.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- The school does not check the implementation of the curriculum carefully enough, including in the mainstream autism base. This means that they do not know whether the curriculum is being implemented as intended. The school should ensure that systems to check the quality of education are put in place to enable them to evaluate the implementation of the curriculum.
- The school has not ensured that all staff know how to deliver the phonics programme well and that sounds are taught in a logical order. This means that pupils are not learning the phonics code as well as they could. The school should ensure that all staff have the necessary skills to deliver the phonics programme with fidelity.
- Some reading books do not match pupils' phonics knowledge. This means pupils do not have sufficient opportunities to practise the sounds they are learning, and this slows their learning. The school should ensure that reading books precisely match the letters and sounds that pupils are learning so that they are able to learn to read effectively and with confidence.
- The school lacks strategic oversight from leaders at all levels. This means that leaders do not know what is working well and what needs to improve. Leaders should ensure that there is a clear strategy for school improvement and that governors and the trust offer necessary challenge and support to bring about sustained improvement.

Background

When we have judged a school to be outstanding, we will then normally go into the school about once every four years to confirm that the school remains outstanding. 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 first ungraded inspection since we judged the predecessor school, St Weonard's Primary School, to be outstanding in November 2017.

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

Unique reference number	147406
Local authority	Herefordshire
Inspection number	10294671
Type of school	Primary
School category	Academy converter
Age range of pupils	2 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	42
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Matt Ashcroft
Headteacher	Alison Taylor
Website	www.stweonards.hmfa.org.uk/
Date(s) of previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Information about this school

- The school has a mainstream autism base currently attended by nine key stage 1 pupils.
- The school does not use any alternative provision.
- Some of the pupils are electively home educated but receive part of their education at school. They are registered on the school's roll. They are expected to attend school for three core days each week. Some pupils attend on additional days and some pupils attend school full time.
- Pupils are taught in three, mixed-age classes.
- The school is part of the Hereford Marches Federation of Academies, which consists of four schools and four associated schools.

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.
- During the inspection, the inspectors carried out deep dives into these subjects: reading, mathematics and history. For each deep dive, the inspectors met with subject leaders, looked at curriculum plans where they were available, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to some teachers, spoke to some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work. Inspectors also looked at samples of pupils' work, spoke to school leaders and looked at curriculum documentation for some other subjects. The lead inspector also listened to pupils read to a familiar adult.
- The inspectors held meetings with the head of school, special educational needs coordinator and other leaders. The lead inspector met with the chair and another representative of the local governing body.
- The lead inspector also met with the executive headteacher, who is also the CEO of the trust and a trustee.
- The inspectors observed pupils' behaviour during lessons, around the school and at lunchtime. The inspectors spoke to pupils about pupils' behaviour.
- To evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding, the 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 positive culture around safeguarding that puts pupils' interests first.
- The inspectors considered responses to Ofsted Parent View, including parent free-text responses. The inspectors also took account of responses to Ofsted's staff and pupil surveys.
- An inspector talked to parents and families at the school gate.

Inspection team

Rachel Henrick, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

Sarah Steer

Ofsted Inspector

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